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SCAN TO GET OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Above: The Red Army thought its invasion of Finland would be a walkover, but the Finns had other ideas

© Getty

CONTRIBUTORS

MIKE HASKEW

History of War regular Mike is back this issue with a very pertinent look at the Winter War of 1939-40, which saw the Soviet Union invade its smaller neighbour Finland. Mike looks at how the Finns defied the odds and stood their ground against the Red Army (p28).

DAVID SMITH

In 1814, Napoleon's campaign against the Sixth Coalition was coming to an end, and the capital of France itself came under attack by Russian, Austrian and German forces. On page 44 David provides a blow-by-blow account of the Battle of Paris.

ALEX BOWERS

Alex is a writer and historian based in the UK. This issue he takes a look at the incredible story of Tibor Rubin, who survived the Holocaust in Hungary, joined the US Army and then despite experiencing anti-semitism earned the Medal of Honor in action during the Korean War (p60).

Welcome

In late 1939, after the division of Poland with Nazi Germany was complete, Stalin set his sights on further territorial expansion. With the Baltic states already in his pocket, he next moved against neighbouring Finland, another nation secretly agreed to lie under the Soviet 'sphere of influence', in his deal with Hitler. After engineering a false flag attack on Red Army outposts near the Karelian Isthmus north of Leningrad, Soviet tanks and infantry were soon pouring across the border, and the Finnish capital Helsinki was bombed. This issue Mike Haskew reveals how the outnumbered and outgunned Finnish defenders managed to hold their ground against the Red Army invasion.

Tim Williamson
Editor-in-Chief

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WAR in FOCUS

WILLIAM III AT THE BOYNE

c.1890s

This stylised painting by Victorian artist Ernest Crofts depicts King William III of England, Scotland and Ireland leading his men during the Battle of the Boyne. Fought on 1 July 1690 in County Meath, Ireland, the Boyne saw William's multinational Protestant army defeat the Catholic Jacobite force of his deposed predecessor King James II, who fled Ireland shortly afterwards. Some Northern Irish Protestants still celebrate William's victory every year in July.

© Alamy

WAR in FOCUS

THE CHINESE STALINGRAD

August 1937

Imperial Japanese Special Naval Landing Forces (SNLF) in gas masks prepare for an advance in the rubble of Shanghai during the Second Sino-Japanese War. This naval infantry unit was formed in 1932 and first saw action in China that year. They participated in heavy fighting during the Battle of Shanghai (August-November 1937) which is often regarded as the engagement where WWII truly started. Known as 'Stalingrad on the Yangtze', Shanghai was captured by the Japanese in one of the bloodiest battles of the conflict.

Image: Wiki / PD / Art

© Alamy

WAR in FOCUS

MEASURING A SPLASH

March 1942

Located at the entrance of Chesapeake Bay at Virginia Beach, Virginia, Fort Story is an installation operated by the US Navy. With dunes, beaches, surf, deep-water anchorage and variable tide conditions, it has been a prime military training environment since 1914. During WWII, Fort Story was heavily reinforced with new batteries of guns and howitzers. These three soldiers were photographed during the war operating an azimuth instrument to measure the angles of splashes during sea-target practice.

Paratroopers of 6th Airborne Division in high spirits en route to their drop zone in Normandy during the early hours of D-Day, 6 June 1944

TIMELINE OF THE...

PARACHUTE REGIMENT

Britain's elite airborne infantry have been in the vanguard of British military history since WWII from D-Day and Arnhem to Iraq and Afghanistan

June 1940 – September 1941

INITIAL FORMATION

Following the example of successful German paratroopers, Winston Churchill orders the formation of a British equivalent. No. 2 Commando are retrained as parachutists and eventually make up three volunteer battalions called 1st Parachute Brigade.

The British learn lessons from the success of German paratroopers such as these pictured during the invasion of Belgium in 1940

10 February 1941 – 28 February 1942

Wing Commander Percy Pickard inspects a captured German helmet with soldiers from 2nd Parachute Battalion after the Bruneval Raid

COLOSSUS AND BITING 01

Operations Colossus and Biting are the first British airborne operations over occupied Europe. The success of Biting in particular (otherwise known as the Bruneval Raid) leads to the brigade's expansion. It becomes the Parachute Regiment (Paras) in August 1942.

November 1942 – April 1943

OPERATION TORCH 02

The Paras participate in the Allied invasion of North Africa. Largely serving as ground forces, they incur heavy casualties but capture over 3,500 Axis soldiers. The Germans refer to them as 'Red Devils'.

Officers from 2nd Battalion rest in Tunisia near Beja after returning from a parachute drop on Depienne, 26 December 1942

NORMANDY CAMPAIGN 04

Five parachute battalions land immediately prior to D-Day and are tasked with destroying enemy bridges and gun batteries. They help to cut off German reinforcements from the Allied landings on Normandy beaches, most notably at Bénouville 'Pegasus' Bridge.

Despite their defeat, the Paras' extreme bravery during Market Garden is a heroic chapter in British military history, with the Dutch venerating their efforts to liberate them

OPERATION MARKET GARDEN 05

Six parachute battalions fight to cross the River Rhine in the Netherlands. 2nd Battalion particularly distinguishes itself at the Battle of Arnhem but unexpectedly heavy German resistance forces the Paras to either surrender or withdraw.

July 1943 – June 1944

6 June – 27 August 1944

17-27 September 1944

24 March 1945

British paratroopers approach Taranto in a landing craft, 9 September 1943

SICILY AND ITALY 03

The regiment participates in the Allied invasions of Sicily and the Italian mainland. They capture key bridges and ports, including Taranto. There are heavy casualties during mountain fighting on the German 'Winter Line' and the Cassino front.

OPERATION VARSITY 06

The largest airborne operation in history conducted on a single day, Varsity sees 16,000 Allied paratroopers cross the Rhine into Germany. 6th Airborne Division flies in 540 aircraft towing c.1,300 gliders, with all objectives being achieved in less than six hours.

97 percent of the German city of Wesel is destroyed during the Allied strategic bombing campaign for Operation Varsity

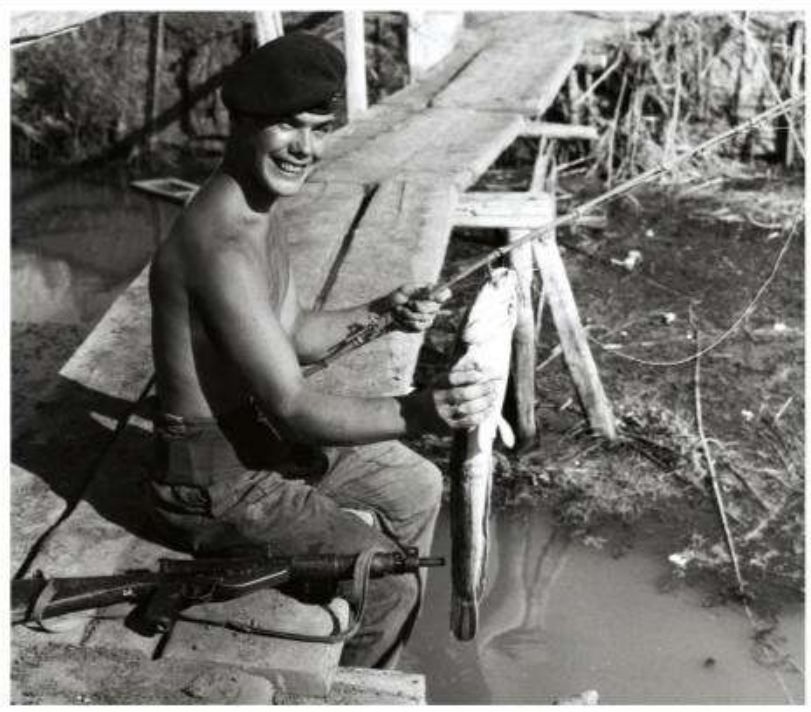
Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Gov

COLOSSUS AND BITING 01
OPERATION VARSITY 06
"THE PARAS ASSIST IN THE EVACUATION OF BRITONS AND AFGHANS DURING THE EVACUATION OF KABUL IN 2021"
OPERATION MARKET GARDEN 05
NORMANDY CAMPAIGN 04
BLOODY SUNDAY 08
SUEZ CRISIS 07
OPERATION TORCH 02
SICILY AND ITALY 03

COLONIAL DEPLOYMENTS

Following WWII, the regiment serves in various areas of the British Empire that are undergoing decolonisation. This includes service in Mandatory Palestine, the Cyprus and Aden Emergencies and the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation.

Paratroopers board an aircraft bound for Cyprus in June 1958 to fight Greek Cypriot nationalist paramilitaries known as EOKA



SUEZ CRISIS 07

3rd Battalion makes the last British full-battalion parachute drop, near Port Said, during the Suez Crisis. Despite the paratroopers' success in capturing two strategically important bridges, the overall crisis ends Britain's status as a colonial superpower.

Gunner Albert Palmer from the regiment's artillery unit finds time to fish during an international crisis at Egypt's Sweet Water Canal, although he keeps his Sten gun by his side

AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ

Paratroopers enter Basra unopposed during the invasion of Iraq and serve in Helmand Province, Afghanistan with NATO forces for many years. They also assist in the evacuation of Britons and Afghans during the evacuation of Kabul in 2021.

Soldiers of 1st Battalion prepare to carry out vehicle searches for weapons in southern Iraq, 30 March 2003

BLOODY SUNDAY 08

Paratroopers shoot 26 unarmed civilians during a protest march in Derry-Londonderry. Fourteen people die in an event that escalates the 'Troubles'. An official 12-year investigation leads the British Government to formally apologise for the regiment's actions in 2010.

A paratrooper grabs a protester from behind on Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972

KOSOVO AND SIERRA LEONE

The regiment participates in NATO peacekeeping operations in Kosovo and supports UN soldiers in Sierra Leone. During the latter engagement, paratroopers from 1st Battalion successfully support an operation to release British hostages held by rebel forces.

Paratroopers patrol the outskirts of Freetown, Sierra Leone, 15 May 2000

1969 – 2005 | 30 January 1972 | 2 April – 14 June 1982 | 1999 – 2001 | 2002-21

NORTHERN IRELAND

Deployed as part of Operation Banner, each of the regiment's three battalions serves an average of 14 tours each during the 'Troubles' over 36 years. The paratroopers suffer disproportionately heavy casualties and become associated with controversial actions.

A Paratrooper assists emergency services following an IRA car bomb attack in Donegall Street, Belfast, 3 March 1972

FALKLANDS WAR

2nd and 3rd Battalions reinforce 3 Commando Brigade against Argentinean forces on the Falkland Islands. They fight with distinction in several engagements, including – most famously – at the Battle of Goose Green.

Paratroopers clean out a mortar on East Falkland before the final British advance on the islands' capital Port Stanley

Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Gov

RISE OF THE 'RED DEVILS'

Formed in the darkest days of World War II, the Paras have gone on to serve in almost every conflict in which Britain has been involved

The Parachute Regiment's origins can be traced back to 1940, when Hitler's effective use of paratroopers, or Fallschirmjäger, in his conquest of Europe inspired Britain to create its own airborne army. On 22 June, as France was falling, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sent a letter to his chief of staff Lord Ismay. "We ought to have a corps of at least 5,000 parachute troops," he wrote. "Advantage must be taken of the summer to train these forces, who can play their part, meanwhile, as shock troops in home defence."

Britain was in a fight for its life and Churchill knew it. Its army had been humiliated on the Continent and might have been lost had it not been for Dunkirk. Survival meant finding a new way to fight, and fast. Within weeks, the newly raised No 2 Commando unit was selected for paratroop duties and by 13 July jump training was underway at the Central Landing School at RAF Ringway, near Manchester.

The British military had never attempted anything like it before and the early trials to work out how to parachute troops into battle were as dangerous as they were experimental. According to records at the Airborne Assault Museum (AAM), five recruits were killed in jumps in the first few months alone. To improve safety, instructors developed a slew of ground-based apparatus to teach jumping and landing techniques. These included mock-up aircraft interiors, high platforms and trapezes to practise jump drills.

"ALL THE GERMANS COULD SEE WERE THESE RED MEN WITH TAILS AND THEIR RESPONSE WAS: 'OH MY GOD, IT'S THE ROTE TEUFEL. THE RED DEVILS ARE HERE!'"

Within a year, a programme had been figured out that would form the basis of jump training to this day. Lasting two or three weeks, depending on the weather, it culminated with the trainees completing two drops from a static balloon and up to eight from an aircraft, including a night jump. These paratroopers, or Paras as they were soon dubbed, also underwent a different type of combat training – one that would eventually involve the notoriously tough P-Company training week with its forced marches, milling (60-second boxing matches) and assault courses.

As one founding commander said: "When a [Para] lands he knows his chances of survival rest on his personal skill. His weapon and the small amount of ammunition he can carry are all he has. He's away from artillery or tank support. He may also be dropped wide and find himself alone or injured."

Paratroopers pictured at the end of their training at RAF Ringway, August 1942

***Right:** Paratroopers ready themselves for a training jump from a Whitley bomber, August 1942*

To prepare recruits for these hardships their physical fitness, marksmanship and fieldcraft were all honed. A unique mindset was also drilled into them, one that emphasised the need for self-discipline, self-reliance and extreme aggression. It was a blend of qualities that would serve them well in the savage battles to come. As this new airborne force evolved so did its name, until by August 1942 it settled on the Parachute Regiment. By then, it had also carried out its first combat missions – two successful, if small-scale, raids in Italy and France that proved the potential of this nascent fighting force.

Further operations on a larger scale followed, with three full battalions jumping into Tunisia in November 1942 – a mission that was to play a special part in regimental history. On landing in the desert, the Paras found themselves covered in a film of red dust. For comfort, many now undid the under-crotch flap of their Denison smocks which prevented it from billowing up during descents. And, with the flap dangling behind them, went in search of the enemy.

This, according to Jon Baker, curator at the AAM, is how the regiment acquired its nom de guerre the Red Devils: “The first time the Paras went into action screaming and shouting, all the Germans could see were these red men with tails and their response was: ‘Oh my God, it’s the Rote Teufel. The Red Devils are here!’”

The camouflaged Denison smock had been specifically designed for Britain’s airborne troops, but it wasn’t the only sartorial item that set these new Paras apart.

When Major-General Frederick Browning took command of 1st Airborne Division in November 1941, he was eager to encourage a greater esprit de corps. As a former Guards officer, he understood how appearance could be both empowering and unifying, and so set about creating a set of unique insignia for his troops. From May 1943 every Para under his command sported a distinctive maroon (or red) beret with a parachute cap badge, and on their right shoulder, just below their jump wings, a patch depicting Pegasus, the winged horse from Greek mythology that delivered thunder and lightning from heaven.

Images © Alamy, Getty

BRIDGEHEADS IN NORTHERN EUROPE

1944 saw the Paras at the tip of the spear in two operations: Overlord and Market Garden. While the former proved hugely successful, the latter was a catastrophe

Although the Paras saw action throughout the Mediterranean, it was the battles they fought in northern Europe from the summer of 1944 onwards that defined their war.

By D-Day, the regiment consisted of 17 battalions that largely belonged to either the 1st or 6th Airborne Divisions. Despite being second-born, the 6th (its name was intended to confuse the enemy) was the first to see action.

On the night of 5 June, 1,500 planes took off from airfields across England and headed across the channel as part of Operation Overlord. Alongside the 13,000 US paratroopers onboard were 7,000 men from 6th Airborne.

A veteran of that night recalled what happened next: “Approaching the coast there was plenty of flak. The pilot took evasive action, making accurate dropping difficult. On jumping, a stream of tracer came so close I had to curl my legs up to avoid it. I landed two miles from where I should have. It was like Dante’s Inferno.”

This experience was typical. Only 40 per cent of the airborne troops landed on target that night, and yet the Paras’ objectives were largely met. The Orne river and canal bridges were captured, as was the Merville Battery. Meanwhile, German troops headed for the invasion beaches were pinned down in relentless firefights with Paras scattered across a vast area.

By nightfall on 6 June, the beachheads were secure and the ground forces were headed inland to link up with their airborne comrades. Despite several German counterattacks, the Paras held their ground for the next two months, until the Allied breakout at the beginning of August. By the time the 6th Division was withdrawn on 27 August, it'd been in combat for 82 days and had lost a fifth of its fighting force. Official casualties were 542 men killed, 1,623 wounded and 725 missing.

Within a month, 1st Airborne would also be thrown into the fray, in the audacious Operation Market Garden. Allied airborne troops would drop into Holland and capture major river crossings between the Belgian and German borders. Ground troops would then rush along the corridor they provided before driving a dagger into the heart of the Reich. The northernmost bridge in this plan was at Arnhem, 81 miles (130km) behind enemy lines, and 1st Airborne were tasked with its capture. From the outset, though, the mission seemed damned.

Due to a lack of planes, 1st Airborne couldn't all be dropped in one go. This meant that members of the first lift would have to defend the drop zones for the second, reducing the size of the force that could take the bridge. Worse still, despite intelligence reports suggesting they'd encounter little resistance, the lightly armed Paras quickly discovered an SS Panzer corps was in the area.

"THE COURAGE AND SACRIFICE ASSOCIATED WITH THE BATTLE AT ARNHEM HAVE BESTOWED UPON THE PARAS A LEGENDARY STATUS"

By nightfall only a few hundred Paras had made it to the bridge. After seizing the north end of it, they were soon cut off. They had orders to hold it for 48 hours until the ground troops arrived. In the event, though, they were never relieved. Instead, against impossible odds, they resisted for three days and four nights, fighting on until their ammunition was spent and the buildings around them were smouldering ruins.

The rest of 1st Division, meanwhile, was being squeezed into an ever-decreasing pocket at Oosterbeek, 2.5 miles (4km) to the west, fighting on until ordered to withdraw on 25 September. Of the 10,095 men who jumped at Arnhem, 1,485 were killed while another 6,525 were taken prisoner. It remains the Paras' costliest defeat, but the courage and sacrifice associated with the battle have bestowed upon them a legendary status.

The Paras' last major combat mission of the war was Operation Varsity. On the morning of 24 March 1945, 6th Airborne was part of a 16,000-strong force that dropped into Germany. Its aim, along with the US 17th Airborne, was to secure key territory and disrupt German defences as a full-scale invasion force crossed the Rhine. Having been reinforced after its mauling in Normandy, 6th Airborne arrived by both parachute and glider in what was to become the largest single-day airborne drop in history. The division's objectives were threefold: to capture the villages of Hamminkeln and Schnappenberg, clear part of the Diersfordt Forest, and secure three bridges over the River Issel.

Ironically, the most substantial force the Germans had defending the area was what remained of Germany's airborne army in the west and the original inspiration for the Parachute Regiment itself. Like their British counterparts, its men were elite troops and the fighting was inevitably fierce. By nightfall, the Paras had achieved all their objectives but had again paid a high price. Of the 7,220 men who landed that day, around 1,400 were either dead, wounded or missing in action.

Once the Allied ground forces linked up with 6th Airborne that evening, the division then took point in the 348 miles (560km) advance east through Germany that followed. By 2 May elements had reached the Baltic port of Wismar, where they linked up with Red Army troops. Just days later, Germany unconditionally surrendered.

***Right:** Two members of the 6th Airborne Division take up a position at a crossroads, 6 June 1944*

***Below:** Men of 6th Airborne Division blackening their faces at RAF Harwell, 5 June 1944*

Images © Alamy, Getty

DEFENDING THE EMPIRE

After WWII, the regiment was scaled down, but as Britain lost its grip on its imperial posessions, it played a key role in the Suez Crisis and the Falklands War

Separated by decades, the Suez Crisis and the Falklands War proved to be two key moments in the regiment's post-war history, although for entirely different reasons.

The Suez Crisis of 1956 was created by a toxic mix of hubris, European exceptionalism and a dodgy deal known as the Protocol of Sèvres. Stung by Egypt's intention to nationalise the Suez Canal, Britain and France – both major stakeholders in it – came up with a scheme to scupper the idea.

After representatives of the British, French and Israeli governments secretly met at Sèvres, on the outskirts of Paris, Israel attacked Egypt. On 29 October, its forces rolled into the Sinai Peninsula east of Suez amid false claims that it'd been attacked from the region. The following day, Britain and France issued an ultimatum: both sides must withdraw 10 miles (16km) from Suez, or the two European powers would intervene militarily.

Israel accepted the terms but Egypt, fearing that it'd lose control over Suez, refused. In

Paratroopers pictured just before jumping into action during the Suez Crisis, November 1956

Suez was the last time the Parachute Regiment would ever jump into combat

response, the British and French unleashed air raids against Egypt from their aircraft carriers and bases in the Mediterranean. Then, on 5 November, after a week of bombing, French and British paratroopers jumped into action at the mouth of the Suez Canal.

Within 30 minutes, men from the 3rd Battalion (or 3 PARA) had seized El Gamil airfield, where they were soon reinforced by helicopter. They then protected an amphibious landing by a larger force the following day.

The fighting was brief but brutal, as British and French forces seized strategic targets and infrastructure. By the evening of 6 November, it was all but over. British casualties stood at 22 dead and 96 wounded, while an estimated 600 Egyptian combatants and 1,000-3,000 civilians had been killed.

Militarily, Suez was a success, but politically it was a disaster for Anthony Eden's government. Under threat of reprisal from the USSR and economic sanctions from the US, as well as condemnation from the UN, Britain and France were forced to withdraw. The Suez Canal was nationalised, and both countries were forced to accept that they were no longer able to control the region as they had done so in the days of empire.

The Suez Crisis also remains the last time, to date, that the Paras jumped into combat.

Headed 'down south'

When Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands on 2 April 1982, Britain sent a 25,000-strong task force by ship to the South Atlantic to retake the territory.

By 25 May, having established a beachhead at San Carlos, the main body of this force marched east to liberate the capital Port Stanley. Among them were men from 3 PARA.

Their comrades from 2 PARA, meanwhile, were tasked with capturing the airfield at Goose Green to the south. To do this, they had to first overcome the Argentinian defences at the top of Darwin Hill. It was difficult terrain to attack. And because the ship carrying the task force's helicopters had been sunk, 2 PARA's commander Colonel H Jones had little choice but to commit to a frontal assault.

The attack began under cover of darkness on 28 May but by dawn had ground to a halt. No doubt hoping to inspire his men, and get them out of their pinned-down positions, Jones single-handedly charged the enemy, only to be cut down before he reached it. Darwin Hill was eventually taken after 14 hours of fighting and Goose Green fell the following morning, with 1,000 Argentinians surrendered to a force of less than 500.

By 11 June, 2 PARA had rejoined the main force for the assault on Port Stanley. But for that to happen, the defences at Mount Longdon had to be cleared first. The job was given to 3 PARA, who seized the ground on the night of 11 June, then had to endure two days of artillery bombardments to hold it.

By the end of the war, 48 Paras had lost their lives and the regiment had earned 71 awards for gallantry. Among them was a posthumous Victoria Cross for Jones, whose act of bravery helped reinforce the public's perception of the Para as a very British hero.

***Below:** Colonel H Jones was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for his bravery during the Falklands War*

***Above:** Paratroopers clean out a mortar before the final assault on Port Stanley in the Falklands*

Images © Alamy, Getty

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Parachute Regiment was at the forefront of the Troubles and paid a high price in casualties and reputation during the longest campaign in airborne history

When civil unrest broke out between Northern Irish Protestant and Catholic communities in the late 1960s, the British Army was deployed to support the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Its presence was made at the request of the unionist government of Northern Ireland and their role was to assert the authority of the British Government in a province that was becoming wracked with sectarian violence.

Spearheading the army's operations in Northern Ireland was the Parachute Regiment, whose deployment lasted until 2005. All three battalions were regularly deployed for an average of 14 tours each, with 2 Para seeing more service during the Troubles than any other infantry battalion. The regiment primarily operated in Belfast, Derry-Londonderry and South Armagh with routines including patrolling, vehicle checkpoints, ambushes, surveillance and riot control. Throughout their service, the paratroopers operated under a constant threat of sniper fire and bombs.

Massacres and ambushes

During their initial deployment, the paratroopers set up a 'Peace Line' in Belfast between the Falls and Shankill Roads to keep Catholic and Protestant communities apart. It was in Belfast that they suffered their first fatality when Sergeant Michael Willetts of 3 Para was killed during a bombing incident at Springfield Road Police Station on 25 May 1971. Willetts had shielded others when a suitcase bomb detonated, which led to him posthumously being awarded the George Cross.

The 1970s were a grim decade for the regiment and they were involved in highly controversial events. During 9-11 August 1971, soldiers from 1 Para were involved in the Ballymurphy Massacre in West Belfast. Ten unarmed civilians were killed in the predominantly Catholic community after the launch of the British Army's Operation Demetrius (internment without trial). The paratroopers' aim had been to arrest suspected members of the Provisional IRA but poor intelligence resulted in a chaotic operation. 1 Para claimed it was fired on by republicans and returned fire but this was strongly denied by the families of those killed. It was not until an official coroner's inquest was completed in May 2021 that the paratroopers' use of lethal force was deemed "not justified". Prime Minister Boris Johnson subsequently "apologised unreservedly" on behalf of the British Government.

The Ballymurphy Massacre was followed months later by what is now considered the regiment's most shameful action: Bloody Sunday. Occurring in Derry-Londonderry on 30 January 1972, soldiers from 1 Para shot 26 unarmed civilians during a civil rights protest in the Bogside area of the city. Fourteen people were killed, with some victims being shot as they fled from the soldiers. Others were shot while they attempted to help the wounded. All of the victims were Catholic.

Like Ballymurphy, the paratroopers claimed they were fired on first but the killings led to increased recruitment into the Provisional IRA. The British Embassy in Dublin was also burned down by an angry crowd. On 22 February 1972, the 'Official' IRA detonated a car bomb at

"WE WERE THERE TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT MAJORITY WHO WERE UNDERSTANDABLY TRAUMATISED BY TERRORIST SHOOTINGS"

Aldershot barracks, the headquarters of 16th Parachute Brigade. Seven ancillary staff were killed in this revenge attack.

Bloody Sunday was one of the most significant events of the Troubles because it worsened British relations with Catholic and nationalist communities and increased support for republican paramilitaries. The controversy over the massacre continued for decades with accusations of British whitewashing over the paratroopers' actions. In June 2010, the soldiers of 1 Para were found to be at fault on Bloody Sunday when the Saville Inquiry was published after a 12-year investigation. Prime Minister David Cameron officially apologised on behalf of the British Government by describing 1 Para's actions as "both unjustified and unjustifiable".

Attempts to prosecute former paratroopers for actions in Northern Ireland continues to be a polarising issue in the UK, but the regiment also suffered proportionally heavy casualties during the Troubles. Fifty-one paratroopers were killed between 1971-96, including the Warrenpoint ambush in County Down on 27 August 1979 in which 18 British soldiers were killed by a Provisional IRA roadside bomb, including 16 men from 2 Para. Occurring on the same day as the assassination of Lord Louis Mountbatten in County Sligo, Warrenpoint was the deadliest attack on the British Army by the Provisional IRA.

The regiment's reputation was heavily tarnished by its service in Northern Ireland but of those killed during the Troubles, 90 percent were victims of republican and loyalist paramilitary attacks. Paratroopers received over 40 gallantry awards, 180 honours and 60 Mentions in Dispatches.

For individual paratroopers, service in Northern Ireland was a gruelling and morally compromising experience. Alastair MacKenzie, who served as a captain in 3 Para during the mid-1970s, spoke to *History of War* of the "vicious atmosphere of the place… We were there to protect the innocent majority who were understandably traumatised by terrorist shootings. The police couldn't look after everybody so we didn't get much support from either side. It was difficult because we were also expressly told we were to maintain an 'acceptable' level of violence. I have to say I thought: 'What is an acceptable level? There should be no violence.' But that's the way it was."

***Above:** A paratrooper surveys the damage following rioting on the streets of Belfast, August 1971*

***Main image:** Youths confront members of 1 Para on William Street, Derry-Londonderry, minutes before troops opened fire on Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972*

Images © Getty

THE WAR ON TERROR

At the start of the 21st century, the regiment served on the frontline of a series of conflicts that would last over a decade

With a long history of tackling insurgencies, the Paras were well-suited to the type of challenges the war on terror presented. Within three months of the September 11 attacks in New York, 2 Para had been deployed to Kabul as part of the International Security Assistance Force in a peace-keeping role. At two months, it was to be a short tour in what turned out to be a long war – a war that would see the regiment return to Afghanistan again and again.

The Paras also helped spearhead the invasion of Iraq on 19 March 2003. Within days, 1 and 3 Para had secured the Rumaylah oil field in the south of the country. By the end of the month, 3 Para were patrolling Basra while 1 Para had occupied Maysan Province and the city of Al Amarah to the north. Having played a key role in ending formal hostilities, the two battalions then returned to the UK.

In 2006, the regiment returned to Afghanistan when 3 Para were deployed to Helmand. This six-month tour was one of the bloodiest of the war. The battalion engaged in around 500 contacts with Taliban fighters, fired 13,000 artillery and mortar shells and 500.000 rounds of ammunition.

That tour is best-known for the Kajaki Dam Incident. On 6 September, Lance-Corporal Stuart Hale, a sniper based at Normandy outpost in Helmand, was crossing a dried riverbed when he accidentally triggered an explosion. The blast blew off his lower right leg and damaged his right hand. After first aid was administered, he was moved to the side of the riverbed and a helicopter evacuation was requested. As they waited, one of the other Paras, Corporal Stuart Pearson, triggered a second explosion that blew off his left leg. By now, the 12-strong group of soldiers realised they were trapped in the middle of an old Soviet minefield.

Despite requesting a Black Hawk with a winch to evacuate the casualties, a Chinook arrived. With the soldiers frantically waving at it not to land, this much heavier helicopter with its far greater down draft caused a third mine to explode. Shrapnel from it hit a third Para,

"IN 2008, IT WAS 2 PARA'S TURN TO TAKE ON THE TALIBAN"

Troops from 3 Para deploy in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, during an operation to capture Taliban leaders in July 2008

Corporal Mark Wright, who received serious injuries to his face, neck, chest and arms. Displaying selfless heroism, medic Lance-Corporal Paul Hartley then treated Wright after crossing the minefield to get to him by repeatedly throwing his backpack out in front of him and leaping onto it.

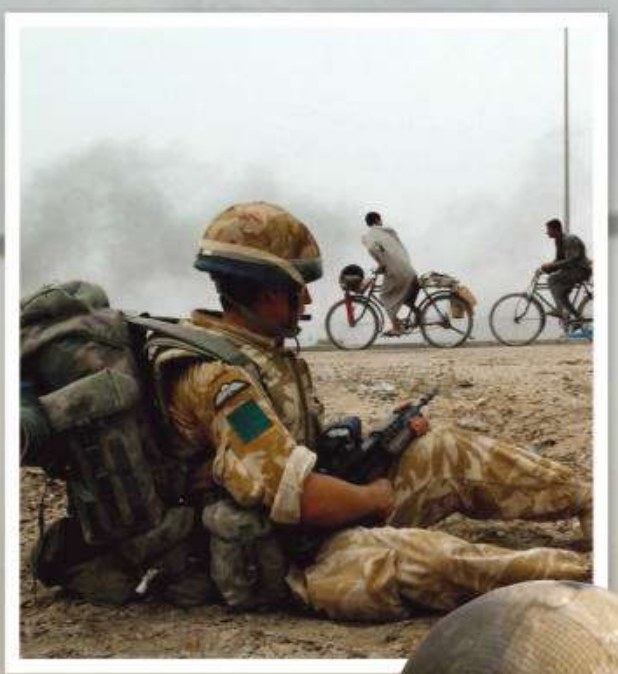
The men would have to wait four hours before they were eventually rescued by Black Hawks. By then, however, another soldier, Fusilier Andrew Barlow, had triggered a fourth mine, blowing off his left leg and causing further injuries to the trapped men. A total of eight soldiers were eventually treated for their wounds.

By the time 3 Para came home from this tour, its troops had won 23 gallantry medals. Among them were two George Crosses. One was for Hartley and the other was awarded posthumously to Wright, who had died of his wounds in the helicopter from Kajaki before it could reach the hospital.

In 2008, it was 2 Para's turn to take on the Taliban. They were sent to the Upper Sangin Valley where the enemy they fought could be as fierce as the 40°C heat in which they often operated. One Forward Operating Base, Gibraltar, came under attack 32 times and was either targeted or bombed on a further 22 occasions. According to one report, of the 160 Paras who manned the base, five were killed, 14 were seriously injured and another 30 were wounded. The regiment hadn't experienced casualty rates like that since World War II. The Paras would return to Afghanistan in 2010 and again in 2011, and by the time the conflict ended had suffered casualties that were among the highest in the British Army, including 151 wounded and 35 dead.

Decades earlier in 1950, ten years after the regiment had been formed, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery summed up the qualities of what makes a Para a Para. "What manner of men are these who wear the maroon-red beret?" he wrote. "They are firstly all volunteers, toughened by hard physical training. They have jumped from the air and by doing so have conquered fear. They have shown themselves to be as tenacious and determined in defence as they are courageous in attack. They are, in fact, men apart – every man an Emperor."

His words are as apt today as ever.



***Above:** The Kajaki Dam in Helmand was the scene of one of the Parachute Regiment's darkest days*

***Above, left:** A paratrooper watches civilians flee Basra in Iraq as British and American forces prepare to enter the city, 2003*

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FINLAND ‹VS› STALIN

THE WINTER WAR

In 1939, with the invasion and division of Poland already complete by the Nazi and Soviet powers, the world took note as the Finnish Army inflicted serious defeats on the invading Red Army the following winter

WORDS **MICHAEL E HASKEW**

***Above:** Soviet propaganda declared the invasion was necessary to protect Leningrad from possible German attack via the Finnish lowlands*

***Above, left:** A Finnish soldier inspects a captured Russian tank during a brief lull in hostilities*

The Russo-Finnish War, also known as the Winter War, erupted on 30 November 1939 when 30 infantry divisions and six tank brigades of the Soviet Red Army, roughly half-a-million men and 2,000 vehicles, invaded neighbouring Finland.

The Finnish Army numbered only about 300,000, while the Soviet Union mustered more than 1.5 million troops under arms; facing overwhelming odds, the Finns possessed few tanks and an antiquated air force primarily composed of biplanes. However, the defenders were well led and exhibited tremendous resourcefulness and superior tactics, thwarting Soviet designs for a quick victory and gaining the admiration of the world. The Finns inflicted serious defeats on the Red Army, which suffered staggering casualties, and held out for more than 100 days before the conflict ended in Soviet victory on 13 March 1940.

Mutual mistrust

Despite the conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact of August 1939 and the cooperation of the Soviet Red Army and German Wehrmacht in the invasion and partition of Poland in September, Joseph Stalin remained wary of Hitler and the Nazis. Stalin feared a German invasion of the Soviet Union and believed that the armies of the Third Reich might use Scandinavia, particularly the lowlands of Finland, as an avenue of attack on Leningrad, a major city in the north of Russia.

To counter this perceived threat, Stalin made political overtures to the leaders of the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, persuading them to make concessions that would allow a better Soviet defensive posture against any German aggression. When the Soviets approached the Finns, however, the latter proved much less malleable than the Baltic leaders. The Finns refused to grant the Soviets occupation of several islands in the Gulf of Finland, a long-term lease for a naval base at Hanko, and other concessions that would extend Soviet defensive capabilities on the Karelian Isthmus, separating the Gulf of Finland and expansive Lake Ladoga, even when offered Russian territory in exchange. The Finns believed that an early indication that they would cooperate in the face of a veiled threat from the Soviet Union would only lead to further coercion.

***Left:** Soviet tanks head to the front during the Russian invasion of Finland. Russian armour suffered heavy losses in the fighting*

***Left, top:** Well-trained soldiers, in their in white winter camouflage, shocked the Soviets with their fierce resistance*

"Russian radio announced that on October 31 the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, (Vyacheslav) Molotov, had delivered an address in the Supreme Soviet in which he discussed the negotiations with Finland and announced details of Russia's demands which he alleged had come about because 'Russia not only had the right, but the responsibility to take serious steps to increase her security.' He mentioned, as one of the reasons for altering the border on the Karelian Isthmus, the fact that Leningrad's population was about as large as that of entire Finland," wrote Professor John H Wuorinen of Columbia University in his book *Finland and World War II, 1939-1944*.

After weeks of fruitless negotiations, Stalin's patience wore thin, and he authorised the NKVD (Soviet interior ministry and secret police) to stage a border incident that would provide the Soviet Union with an excuse for invasion. On 26 November, Soviet artillery bombarded one of their own military outposts near the village of Mainila on the Finnish frontier, and subsequently the Soviets accused the Finns of committing the aggressive act. Amid the Finnish denial and without a declaration of war, the Red Army advanced toward Finnish positions in the Karelian Isthmus, particularly the fortifications of the Mannerheim Line, and elsewhere. Soviet bombers struck the Finnish capital of Helsinki and other targets, both civilian and military. Sixty-one civilians were killed during the first air raid on the capital city.

The Soviets were optimistic that their armed forces would overwhelm the Finns in as little as 12 days, and they expected that the military campaign would conclude by December, in time for Stalin's 61st birthday celebration. They initiated a land campaign across the southern Finnish border along with sustained aerial bombing and anticipated naval sorties to mount amphibious landings and conduct shore bombardment of coastal targets. However, they had seriously underestimated the level of Finnish resistance that their forces would soon encounter.

Red Army readiness

Several factors created significant difficulties as the Soviets prosecuted the Winter War. Stalin, in an orgy of paranoia, had purged the ranks of the Red Army during the early 1930s, demoting, exiling or executing many of the most experienced senior officers in the Soviet military. As

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a result, those troops that undertook the invasion of Finland were poorly trained and sometimes lacking in the latest weapons and equipment. As a result, morale was poor.

Since the war was expected to come to a swift and favourable conclusion, the Soviets further failed to provide winter uniforms for their soldiers or to prepare tanks and guns to operate effectively in brutal winter weather, temperatures sometimes reaching -40°C. Therefore, many Red Army soldiers died of exposure in the field or succumbed to wounds when lifesaving blood plasma froze and was rendered useless. Others were incapacitated by frostbite, losing fingers or toes and sometimes entire limbs.

Red Army planners also failed to consider the terrain over which their troops would be obliged to fight. Dotted with lakes, the dense forests and marshes of southern Finland were virtually impassable, and the Soviets were compelled to utilise the available roads and logging trails that traversed the countryside. As a result, their long, mechanised columns were often strung out for miles and vulnerable to attack. Concurrently, the onset of winter weather and few hours of daylight near the Arctic Circle hampered the offensive.

Conversely, the Finnish Army was highly trained and motivated. Its soldiers were well led and their overall commander, Field Marshal Gustaf Mannerheim, understood the advantages he possessed and exploited them to the fullest. Finnish soldiers were outfitted with warm winter clothing, and their fortifications along the Mannerheim Line were well heated and reinforced to withstand considerable Soviet artillery bombardment and bombing raids. Finnish ski troops were skilled in the art of winter warfare, camouflaged with white coveralls to blend in with the snowy landscape, and they attacked the Red Army columns ferociously and then melted away into the forest.

March of folly

Early Soviet operations on land, sea and air made relatively little progress. Although Red Air Force bombers hit their targets repeatedly, approximately 80 percent of the Finnish population was dispersed, residing in the countryside rather than major cities, and unfazed by efforts to terrorise large numbers of civilians. In the cities, the people endured the aerial bombardment with unflagging confidence in their armed forces and refused to buckle.

Soviet naval operations were equally unsuccessful. Although several of the disputed islands were occupied, no major amphibious landings of troops were achieved on the Finnish mainland. The Soviet Baltic Fleet engaged in shore bombardment of the coastal town of Porvoo about 30km east of Helsinki, but a landing there was repulsed. Similar efforts to bombard port facilities at Turku and Hanko did not produce favourable results for landing operations. At the same time, Finnish coastal batteries inflicted significant damage on Soviet naval forces, sinking or damaging three destroyers, several supply vessels, two submarines and the battleship October Revolution.

“MOLOTOV COCKTAILS IMMEDIATELY BURST INTO FLAMES AND FORCED THE RED ARMY TANKERS TO ABANDON THEIR VEHICLES OR BE CONSUMED IN THE CONFLAGRATION”

At the same time, Finnish communist Otto Kuusinen proclaimed the formation of the pro-Soviet Finnish People’s Government in the city of Terijoki, hoping to rally a latent Marxist fifth column effort to topple the legitimate government in Helsinki. The effort went nowhere, as the Finnish people were united in their nationalism and loathing of the Soviet Union.

Merits of Motti

While its fixed positions at the Mannerheim Line withstood repeated direct attacks, further north the Finnish Army successfully employed the tactic of ‘Motti’, which translates into English literally as ‘bundle of sticks’. Taking full advantage of the high mobility of their elite ski troops and the restrictive nature of the terrain, the Finns assaulted the road-bound Soviet convoys and inflicted heavy casualties. Such tactics rendered the Red Army superiority in numbers and armoured vehicles ineffective.

The Motti tactic involved fixing a Soviet convoy via reconnaissance, striking swiftly to destroy leading and trailing vehicles to bring it to a halt, and then executing flank attacks that would fragment the column into isolated pockets of enemy troops and vehicles – bundles of sticks – as they were called. In turn, the Finns would attack each pocket beginning with the weakest. As the attacks progressed, the combat efficiency of the Soviet troops in the stronger pockets would erode due to lack of supplies and reinforcements, as well as the numbing and bitter cold.

Although they lacked sufficient numbers of anti-tank guns, enterprising Finnish soldiers destroyed many Soviet tanks with glass bottles filled with flammable liquid that were thrown against the hot exhaust or turrets of enemy armoured vehicles. These improvised weapons immediately burst into flames and forced the Red Army tankers to abandon their vehicles or be consumed in the conflagration.

Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov had asserted that the Red Air Force bombers then attacking Finnish cities were actually dropping bread to the hungry people, while the planes were in fact deploying cluster bombs that were nicknamed ‘Molotov Breadbaskets’. Therefore, in a mocking response to the foreign minister’s deception the anti-tank weapons were dubbed ‘Molotov Cocktails’, drinks to go with the Soviet supplied food.

***Left, top:** Machine gun teams made good use of dense woodland to gun down their numerically superior Russian enemy*

***Left:** Finland’s troops used snow shoes to remain mobile in the harsh conditions*

***Far left:** Members of Finland’s Home Guard patrol the streets. Civilian morale remained high during the conflict*

***Right:** A Swedish volunteer, January 1940*

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Oulu
Suomussalmi
Hyrynsalmi
Khumo
Repola
Vlivieska
Umea
Gulf of Bothnia
FINLAND
Ilsalmi
Nurmes
Vaasa
Kuopio
Joënsun
Iomantsi
Jyväskylä
Pielsämäki
Vartsila
Tohmajärvi
Pori
Tampere
Mikkel
Sortavala
Pitkaranta
Salmi
Rauma
Kouvola
Summa
Hamina
Koivisto
Borga
Turko
Helsinki
Hanko
Gulf of Finland
Lake Ladoga
Karelian Isthmus
Lake Onega
Leningrad
Tallinn
ESTONIA
USSR
65°
60°
54
155
139
75
56
18
8
168
13
7
III
XX
XXXX
X

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The Winter War

November 1939 – March 1940

Russian attacks

Finnish attacks

Finnish reinforcements

Russian positions

Finnish positions

Pre-1940 border

0 100 km

0 100 miles

Arctic Ocean

Petsamo

Salmijaryi

Polyarnoe

Murmansk

Nautsi

XX 104

XXXX 14

II

XXXX

N

Kola Peninsula

SWEDEN

Torne

XX 122

Kandalaksha

Kuolojärvi

XX 88

Markajarvi

Salla

III

Rovaniemi

Kemiträsk

FINLAND

Kuusamo

XX 163

III

Boden

Tornio

Kemi

White Sea

XX 44

“THERE ARE SO MANY RUSSIANS AND OUR COUNTRY IS SO SMALL, WHERE WILL WE FIND ROOM TO BURY THEM ALL?”

Above: *Finnish ski troops take a rest from fighting, somewhere in the north of the country*

Inset, below: *Clutching a microphone as well as a rifle, a Finnish radio reporter covers the fighting*

This Finnish Maxim M-32-33 machine gun nest was positioned just 100 metres from Russian forces, February 1940

Frozen and frustrated

The Finnish Army and mobilised elements of the volunteer Finnish Civil Guard initially gave ground on the Karelian Isthmus but retired to their main line of resistance at the Mannerheim Line and successfully held off direct Red Army attempts to breach the fortifications as well as several flanking attempts. By late December the last thrust against the Finns was repulsed, and 13 divisions of the Soviet 7th and 13th Armies halted offensive operations there by January.

On the northern and central fronts, guerrilla warfare was prevalent as Finnish forces struck Soviet columns and concentrated on supply lines and field kitchens. Their reasoning was simple: if the Red Army troops were without the necessary materiel to carry on offensive operations and they could not be fed, they would essentially become marooned and quite susceptible to defeat. When substantial engagements did occur, the Soviets were often so tired, hungry and demoralised that they were quickly overcome.

As the Soviet casualties mounted, one apocryphal comment from a Finnish soldier, marvelling at the huge losses, went: “There are so many Russians and our country is so small, where will we find room to bury them all?”

Although elements of the Soviet 14th Army succeeded in capturing the province of Petsamo in the north and advanced southward to the village of Nautsi, it was their high-water mark in the region. Finnish resistance and winter weather conspired to create significant supply difficulties, forcing a retirement in mid-December. A renewed thrust met with similar results amid temperatures that plunged to -25°C. Remarkably, only a single company of Finnish troops and a single artillery battery had opposed the Soviets initially, while the defenders’ strength in the area peaked at just one infantry battalion.

In the southeast, the Soviet 8th Army attempted to outflank the Finns on the Karelian Isthmus. A two-pronged thrust involving nine divisions and a tank brigade made some progress in the beginning. However, Field Marshal Mannerheim ordered two divisions to reinforce the defenders, and subsequent Finnish counterattacks at Tolvajarvi threw the Soviets back. The Red Army’s 75th and 139th Divisions were destroyed in the fighting. The Soviets hurriedly rushed reinforcements to the area and managed to maintain a defensive line in Finnish territory as the fighting on this front devolved into stalemate.

Reckoning at Suomussalmi

Perhaps the most embarrassing defeat of the Red Army during the Winter War occurred in the vicinity of Suomussalmi, a village in the wilderness of central Finland that stood along a vital roadway and the rail line that stretched from the Arctic port of Murmansk to Leningrad and on to the port city of Oulu on the Gulf of Bothnia.

The Soviet Eighth Army pushed into Finland in early December and soon came under harassing attacks from Finnish ski troops. After four days, the 163rd and 44th Divisions arrived at Suomussalmi, and the advance continued as only a single Finnish Army division and a handful of Civil Guard units directly opposed them. When the Soviets had reached over 18 miles (30km) beyond the village, the lone Finnish division counterattacked and drove the invaders back to Suomussalmi.

From there, the Motti tactic succeeded in driving a wedge between the two Red Army divisions. The Finns used the natural terrain features such as heavy forests, lakes and marshes to their advantage and chose to attack in areas where these were likely to facilitate chokepoints. Camouflaged in their white snow suits, the Finns moved forward on skis, set up concealed machine-gun emplacements, and then opened fire on the exposed columns of the 163rd Division. Raking the Soviets, the machine-gunners established corridors for more Finnish soldiers to rush forward with rifles, hand grenades and explosive satchel charges to assault the enemy infantry and destroy or disable tanks and trucks.

Major General Andrei Zelentsov, commander of the 163rd Division, knew he was in trouble as his numerical superiority was neutralised and his columns immobilised. He sent word for the 44th Division to provide reinforcements, but the 44th found the going equally difficult. True to form, the division advanced along the only passable road in the area, right into the teeth of a blocking Finnish force. Only 350 Finnish troops were required to stymie the progress of the 17,000 soldiers of the 44th Division.

***Left:** A member of the defending army crosses boggy terrain in Tuulos with a bicycle, c.1939*

***Left, bottom:** Machine gun crews established corridors through which their comrades could attack Russian forces*

***Right:** Elite ski troops could strike quickly then melt away into the forests*

Images © Alamy, Getty

Finland's military lost 25,000 killed and 45,000 wounded during the Winter War

Meanwhile, the 163rd Division was decimated. For two harrowing weeks the Soviets were subjected to repeated small-arms attacks, mortar and artillery fire, and an occasional strafing run by planes of the small Finnish Air Force. General Zelentsov attempted to break out of the trap on Christmas Eve, but the effort was a miserable failure. The Soviets tried again on Christmas Day, and the results were the same. Some Red Army soldiers, clad in their dark green uniforms, ran into the open across a frozen lake, making themselves highly visible targets. They were shot down in great numbers. The 163rd Division ceased to exist as an effective fighting force, and the Finns collected 500 prisoners of war. Zelentsov was among the 5,000 dead Red Army soldiers.

One Soviet political commissar attached to the 44th Division was wary of the poor fighting spirit of the soldiers he accompanied. Surveying the grim ranks, he noted gravely: "Their faces were sullen, their bodies tired, their spirits low. Men, machines, artillery, tanks, horses, all moving toward Suomussalmi, most of them, it proved, to destruction and death."

The ordeal of the 44th Division stands out, even in the context of the slaughter that befell the Red Army on numerous occasions during the Winter War. During two days of fighting on 6-7 January 1940, the 44th Division was virtually annihilated. The Finns dismembered the Soviet division into Mottis and then, like wolves, tore into their flanks. They destroyed the division artillery park, took prisoners, and then after completing two-hour forays against the enemy they retired to warm dugouts for food and four hours' sleep. At regular intervals the Finnish soldiers were rotated to soothing saunas near the front line.

When one group of Red Army soldiers attempted to break out of the iron ring, a captured colonel told the Finns the combat experience was similar to "butting our heads against a stone wall… it was unbelievable." By 5 January, the 44th Division had been hacked into seven separate detachments, each besieged by the Finnish. Within 48 hours, the invading force had disintegrated. Only 700 survivors of the division's original strength of 17,000 escaped the jaws of the Finnish trap. The remainder were killed or captured. The 44th Division abandoned 43 tanks and 270 other vehicles. Total Soviet casualties during the Battle of Suomussalmi included 27,500 dead.

On 11 January 1940, Brigade Commander Alexei Vinogradov, commander of the 44th Division, was shot by firing squad – the survivors of the unit witnessed the execution. Prominent among the charges against the officer was the "irrevocable loss of 55 field kitchens".

"MEN, MACHINES, ARTILLERY, TANKS, HORSES, ALL MOVED TOWARD SUOMUSSALMI, MOST OF THEM TO DESTRUCTION AND DEATH"

The world watches

While the Finns took the measure of the Red Army, the rest of the world looked on in amazement. The League of Nations – otherwise impotent in the face of such armed aggression – expelled the Soviet Union. Neighbouring Sweden supplied the Finns with arms and ammunition, and the United States offered sizable financial support. However, in terms of manpower, tiny Finland was on its own against the Soviet colossus.

Although armed intervention on behalf of the Finns was impractical, both the British and French governments contemplated just that. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill expressed his country's support for the Finnish government and people.

"Finland shows what free men can do," Churchill commented in January 1940. "Everyone can see how communism rots the soul of a nation; how it makes it abject and hungry in peace, and proves it base and abominable in war. We cannot tell what the fate of Finland may be, but no more mournful spectacle could be presented… than that this splendid northern race should at last be worn down and reduced to servitude worse than death by a dull brutish force of overwhelming numbers."

The prime minister's words were a bit prophetic, although most observers understood that Stalin and the Soviet government would exert the necessary military strength to subdue Finland at some point in the near future. Some

***Above, far left:** Field Marshall Gustaf Mannerheim (left) and General Karl Lennart Oesch discuss Finland's defensive preparations, 1939*

***Above, centre:** The corpses of slain soldiers froze solid in the conditions that saw temperatures drop to well below zero*

***Above:** Soviet soldiers pictured patrolling near the front lines*

historians have asserted that the troops initially sent to war in Finland were older men, aged 35-40, and reservists, some of whom had been called up scarcely three weeks before entering combat.

Winter War endgame

After halting operations in January 1940 and taking stock of the high cost so far, the Soviets redoubled their efforts to win the war, committing massive forces and concentrating their renewed effort on the Karelian Isthmus. The renewed offensive was placed under the command of General Semyon Konstantinovich Timoshenko, who marshalled his forces for a swift, decisive blow against the stubborn Finns.

On 1 February, Timoshenko unleashed the heaviest artillery bombardment since World War I against the defences of the Mannerheim Line. Ten days later, overwhelming Soviet ground troops and tanks breached the Finnish perimeter and drove deep across the Karelian Isthmus. The Finns were immediately facing mounting casualties and shortages of supplies and ammunition. By early March, the outcome of the fighting was inevitable.

Finnish diplomats were forced to the negotiating table in the Soviet capital of Moscow, and on 13 March 1940 concluded a peace treaty that imposed significant territorial losses on Finland. The proud but exhausted Finns were required to cede approximately 11 percent of their territory, home to one-eighth of the nation's population, including Viipuri, its second-largest city, 30 percent of the country's natural resources, and a 30-year lease on a naval base at Hanko on the Gulf of Finland.

In relative terms, the cost of the war had been high for both sides. Finland lost 25,000 killed and 45,000 wounded, while estimates of Soviet casualties run from 150,000 to 200,000 dead and more than 200,000 wounded.

Perhaps the greatest unintended consequence of the 1939-40 Winter War remains a point for historians to ponder and debate. The performance of the Red Army in Finland undoubtedly gained the attention of Hitler and the Nazis, probably influencing the Führer's decision to invade the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, which was ultimately disastrous for Germany in World War II. Further, had Britain or France committed troops on behalf of Finland in 1939, the prospects for establishing the alliance that won the ultimate victory over the Nazis in 1945 might well have been compromised beyond repair.

The agile ski troops were referred to as 'ghosts' by their demoralised Russian opponents

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“THE CANCELLATION OF SKYBOLT CAUSED A SHARPENING OF TENSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS THAT THREATENED TO UNFASTEN THE TIES OF THE ‘SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP’”

© Getty

THE OTHER MISSILE CRISIS

WORDS **CLIVE WEBB**

No sooner had the Cuban Missile Crisis ended than the United States became embroiled in another nuclear weapons dispute – this time with its British ally. The disagreement over development of the Skybolt ballistic missile led to a diplomatic coup for Britain that redefined its nuclear strategy

As the world stood on the brink of nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, US President John F Kennedy faced conflicting pressures from civilian and military officials on his course of action. Even when the president reached decisions he needed reassurance they were the right policy to pursue. Kennedy found that support in his transatlantic telephone calls to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan.

The British premier did not perform an active role in the decision-making process. Kennedy had already resolved to impose a naval blockade preventing Soviet vessels transporting nuclear missiles to Cuba before he assured Macmillan "we can and should be in the closest touch".

Translated into action, those words meant that the president would keep the PM informed without actually wanting his advice. As the British Ambassador to Washington, David Ormsby-Gore, mused: "I can't honestly think of anything said from London that changed the US action."

Macmillan was nonetheless a trusted confidante who acted as a sounding board to a president wrestling with his own political calculus throughout the crisis. Their bond strengthened the 'Special Relationship' between their countries that had only a few years earlier been so strained by their confrontation over the Suez Crisis of 1956.

It was therefore a sudden and dramatic turn of events that only weeks after the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Britain and the US should become embroiled in a dispute that threatened the future of their transatlantic partnership. Tensions arose over the decision by Washington to cancel the Skybolt air-launched ballistic missile on which London based its strategy for a British nuclear deterrent. The 60th anniversary of those events affords an opportunity to reflect not only on the causes of the crisis but also its enduring diplomatic and military outcomes.

Royal Air Force Wing Commander Charles E Ness (right) showing the Skybolt missile to one of his men

The Skybolt, pictured here at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, was an air-launched ballistic missile that was beset by technical problems

In search of a British nuclear deterrent

The Skybolt crisis was caused by the British government's determination to maintain a national nuclear deterrent while being reliant on American technology. During the 1950s the V-bombers used to launch Thor missiles were becoming obsolete because of their vulnerability to enhanced Soviet defence systems. In need of an improved deterrent, the government in 1955 launched a development programme for a new intermediate-range ballistic missile: Blue Streak. Black Hole might have been a better name. In February 1960 the British cancelled the programme and with it the aspiration of an independent nuclear deterrent.

Several factors account for the failure of Blue Streak. The underground silos from which the missiles would have been launched were vulnerable to attack. With an early warning system of only four to five minutes, Blue Streak was ineffective as a defensive weapon. There were limits too because of advances in Soviet anti-ballistic capabilities in its offensive use. With a budget estimated between £500-600 million, Blue Streak offered too little at too large a cost.

To secure the future of its nuclear deterrence the British government needed help from the other side of the Atlantic, and in March 1960 Macmillan convened with US President Dwight D Eisenhower at the US leader's country retreat Camp David in Maryland.

The meeting resulted in a Memorandum of Agreement that included a commitment by the United States to supply Britain with the Skybolt air-launched ballistic missile. While not an explicit condition of sale, Macmillan in turn consented to strategic access for US submarines equipped with Polaris missiles to the Holy Loch base in Scotland.

Close reading of the memorandum revealed an important caveat. According to the terms of agreement, "this offer is necessarily dependent on the successful and timely completion of its development program". That small print would have enormous implications.

In November 1960, Democrat John F Kennedy defeated Republican Richard M Nixon to become the 35th president of the United States. The arrival of a new administration in Washington did not at first threaten the Skybolt deal, and US Defence Secretary Robert McNamara accelerated the research and development programme for the missile by increasing its budget.

"THERE HAVE BEEN TWO COMPETING EXPLANATIONS FOR THE CRISIS, THAT IT WAS EITHER A CASE OF 'MUDDLE' OR ONE OF 'MISCHIEF'"

The submarine-launched Polaris ballistic missile was considered more responsive and less vulnerable than land-based systems

The Boeing B-52 Stratofortress was adapted to carry both Skybolt and Hound Dog missiles on pylons mounted under the wings

British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan (left) and US President John F Kennedy held an emergency summit in the Bahamas in December 1962

Then he changed his mind. On 7 November 1961 McNamara announced the cancellation of Skybolt. His reason for doing so was principally because of technical problems – all five tests of the missile had ended in failure. Estimates of when Skybolt would become operational slipped from 1964 to 1966. With that came the prospect of further spending on a programme that had already run well over-budget, from a planned $354 million to $493 million by the time McNamara pulled the plug.

There was also strategic calculation on the part of the Kennedy administration. The opinion of many policy makers in the US State Department was that the defence of Western Europe was best served by the creation of a Multilateral Force of ballistic missile submarines and warships crewed and commanded by NATO. There was no prospect of implementing the plan if Britain were to retain an independent British nuclear deterrent. McNamara made clear in a speech of June 1961 that he considered such a force "dangerous, expensive, prone to obsolescence, and lacking in credibility". Withdrawing Skybolt would ensure the British had no choice but to abandon their ambitions and comply with State Department strategy.

Strains in the 'Special Relationship'

The cancellation of Skybolt caused a sharpening of tensions between the two governments that threatened to unfasten the ties of the 'Special Relationship'. Historically there have been two competing explanations for the crisis, that it was either a case of 'muddle' or one of 'mischief'.

British officials claimed to be stunned by the sudden and surprise cancellation of Skybolt. A parliamentary announcement by British Minister of Defence Peter Thorneycroft provoked fury from MPs, including many of Macmillan's own backbenchers. Arthur Vere Harvey, who had served as a senior RAF officer before taking his seat as Conservative MP for Macclesfield, was among the many who protested "the British people are tired of being pushed around" by the US.

A B-52 Stratofortress bomber armed with two Hound Dog missiles. The British government declined JFK's offer to sell them the system

Images: Alamy, Getty

For all the protest at the time, there is an increasing consensus among historians that British officials feigned much of their supposed ignorance about the impending cancellation of Skybolt. In the words of reporter Henry Brandon: "The writings were on the wall, but the British Government didn't believe them and didn't want to."

Transatlantic communication was not always clear and consistent. Washington had more immediate concerns during the Cuban Missile Crisis than the potential annulment of its deal to supply Britain with Skybolt. For the most part, however, Washington provided plenty of warnings to London that the missile was overpriced and under-performing. RAF research staff produced regular reports on the programme, senior scientists from British defence establishments held meetings with their American counterparts, and Macmillan himself mused of the missile that "if it doesn't work, we won't buy it".

Why then did the British government react with apparent astonishment and betrayal when Washington grounded Skybolt? For all the information that officials had about the technical problems with the new missile they did relatively little to lobby for the retention of the programme. This apparent inertia has led to an alternative reading of events in which British officials manipulated the diplomatic crisis to pressure Washington into offering an alternative to Skybolt that would ensure their strategic objective of securing a national nuclear deterrent. If that were so, it succeeded.

The Nassau Agreement

Rising transatlantic tensions resulted in an emergency summit between Kennedy and Macmillan held from 19 to 21 December 1962 at Nassau, Bahamas. The prime minister immediately played his diplomatic ace, warning that the loss of a national nuclear deterrent would bring down not only his government but also the broader Anglo-American alliance. Macmillan insisted that Kennedy had a "moral obligation" to support its most important strategic partner by providing an alternative to Skybolt.

The president put several options on the table. First was a renewed offer of Skybolt with Britain paying 50 percent of the research and development costs. Macmillan declined. Test failures showed that Skybolt was no longer a credible deterrent. Second came a proposal to sell Britain Hound Dog air-launched cruise missiles. Once more, Macmillan demurred.

What the prime minister had set his sights on was the submarine-launched ballistic missile Polaris. The US, however, was only willing to offer the weapon as part of the Multilateral Force promoted by the State Department. Eventually the two sides reached a compromise: the US would arm British submarines with Polaris but under NATO command. Macmillan secured a caveat that Britain would be able to use the missiles unilaterally "where Her Majesty's Government may decide that supreme national interests are

“THE RESOLUTION OF THE SKYBOLT CRISIS HAD MOMENTOUS IMPLICATIONS NOT ONLY FOR THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT BUT ALSO THE ARMED FORCES”

at stake”. The clause was symbolic since it was difficult to countenance any other circumstances in which Britain would launch the missiles.

Nassau was nonetheless a triumph for Macmillan. Britain would remain dependent on the United States for the provision of Polaris but still possess a nuclear deterrent that protected its status as a world power. Macmillan had won the argument not only between Britain and the United States but also within his own country.

The Cuban Missile Crisis had demonstrated to the prime minister the necessity of Britain maintaining a nuclear deterrent. Unbeknown to the public, missiles stationed along the east coast had stood on a high state of alert throughout the standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union. Detractors nonetheless pointed out that this nuclear shield did nothing to confer any greater influence for Britain in the superpower policy that brought the world back from devastating conflict. For the British government, though, it was a matter not only of power but also of pride, the retention of the country’s place in what Macmillan called “the nuclear club”. The Nassau Agreement nonetheless cost Britain membership of another association. Only weeks after its signing, French Prime Minister Charles de Gaulle, indignant that Britain had undermined any prospect for the creation of a Multilateral Force, vetoed its application to join the European Economic Community.

A new British nuclear policy

The resolution of the Skybolt crisis had momentous implications not only for the British government but also the armed forces. After World War II RAF Bomber Command had been central to the strategic development and delivery of a British nuclear deterrent. When the cancellation of Blue Streak threatened the loss of that functional and symbolic status the RAF lobbied hard for Skybolt because it would preserve the importance of the V-bomber force to British nuclear defence. Faced with the loss of Skybolt, Air Staff proposed an alternative air-launched missile, Pandora. By their estimate it would be relatively inexpensive and ready for operation within three years.

Chief of the Defence Staff Louis Mountbatten countered that it would be three times the cost and take at least two years longer than the RAF forecast. Mountbatten had formerly served as First Sea Lord and his position on the future of the British nuclear deterrent reflected that of Naval Staff who pressed the case for the adoption of Polaris. The submarines used to launch Polaris were, they argued, more responsive and less vulnerable than land-based defence systems. That reasoning ensured Pandora’s box remained sealed.

The adoption of Polaris therefore represented a turning point in British policy – the RAF surrendering to the Navy the command of the nuclear deterrent that it had been so desperate to maintain. According to Mountbatten’s biographer Philip Ziegler there were resultant tensions and resentments between the two military branches, the RAF being “left with the conviction that they had been outmanoeuvred and robbed of their rightful heritage”.

There was one final twist in the story. Only a day after the signing of the Nassau Agreement, the United States Air Force conducted a further test flight of Skybolt. It worked. For a moment there were fears that this literal and figurative bombshell would impede the sale of Polaris. Kennedy was certainly furious, commissioning a report to learn lessons from a diplomatic dispute in which Britain had shown mischief could win over might.

The demise of Skybolt led to the RAF losing its primacy in Britain’s nuclear deterrent strategy

FURTHER READING

- *Ambiguity and Deterrence: British Nuclear Strategy 1945-1964* by John Baylis (Clarendon Press, 1995)
- *Nuclear Diplomacy and the Special Relationship* by Ian Clark (Oxford University Press, 1994)
- *Macmillan: The Official Biography* by Alistair Horne (Macmillan, 2012)

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				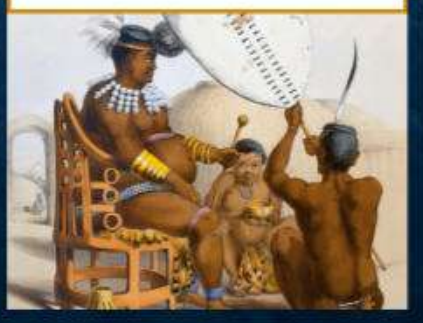

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PARIS, FRANCE 30 MARCH 1814

PARIS

In 1814, after 20 years of war, the French nation was on its knees as a massive coalition of enemy forces closed in on the capital

WORDS **DAVID SMITH**

Marshal Moncey, depicted giving orders to a colonel of the National Guard, Claude Odiot, during the Battle of Paris

© Getty

The disastrous retreat from Moscow following the invasion of 1812 would have broken most military commanders, as well as the war-fighting spirit of most nations, but Napoleon Bonaparte had proved to have superhuman resilience, raising a new army in 1813.

He continued to find success on the battlefields of Germany, but his army was too inexperienced to deliver the kind of decisive victories that might have shaped events in his favour. At the same time, Wellington's masterful campaign in the Iberian Peninsula, coupled with savage guerrilla warfare (the so-called 'Spanish Ulcer') was draining French manpower and resolve.

At Leipzig, in October 1813, Napoleon was defeated by the massed ranks of his enemies, losing around 60,000 men and bringing his total losses for that year to half-a-million. It was a staggering blow that forced him to withdraw into France. There, the forces of the Sixth Coalition began to close in.

The defence of France

With the homeland now under threat, Napoleon hoped that his countrymen would rally to the cause. He called up nearly a million conscripts, including old men and teenagers, believing that he could overawe even the vast armies now marching against him. The problem was that his country had now been fighting for more than 20 years. While patriotism was still strong, war fervour was in shorter supply and only around 110,000 made themselves available to fight. It was a grossly insufficient number, but Napoleon set to work as best he could. He organised a 70,000-strong army to protect Paris and took the rest of his men on an ambitious campaign to defeat the enemy armies. It would push Napoleon's military genius to its limits, but he was to enjoy a surprising number of successes.

The main threats to Napoleon were three Coalition armies entering north-eastern France. The British advance from the Iberian Peninsula and Heinrich von Bellegarde's Austrian army in Italy posed less of a threat to Napoleon, but still tied up French soldiers.

Of more immediate concern was the Army of Bohemia (around 200,000 Austrians commanded by Prince Schwarzenberg), the Army of Silesia (around 60,000 Prussians and Russians commanded by Prince Blücher) and the Army of the North (around 120,000 men, comprising Prussians and Russians commanded by Ferdinand von Wintzingerode and Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr von Bülow, and Dutch troops commanded by Prince Bernadotte). These armies had a combined total of close to 400,000 men, but coordination would be their weakness. For a start, the

"THE CAMPAIGN WOULD PUSH NAPOLEON'S MILITARY GENIUS TO ITS LIMITS, BUT HE WAS TO ENJOY A SURPRISING NUMBER OF SUCCESSES"

Army of the North was unable to move at the designated time – while Schwarzenberg and Blücher set their men in motion in December 1813, the Army of the North would not enter the picture until several months later.

Napoleon made use of interior lines of communication to win limited victories at Brienne and La Rothière, before stopping Blücher in his tracks in the Six Days' Campaign of 10–15 February 1814. Though impressive in isolation, these triumphs did nothing to change the strategic reality: the armies of the Sixth Coalition were marching implacably on Paris.

Napoleon's gamble

However skilfully he played his cards, Napoleon had a losing hand and he realised that it was only a matter of time until his army was worn down. He decided to risk everything on a surprise move to the east, away from Paris and into the lines of communication of the Coalition armies. He hoped that he could cause enough doubt among his enemies to make them break off their advance on the capital.

It was a bold move, but almost certainly doomed to fail even before a letter outlining his plan fell into enemy hands. As Napoleon moved east, a token force of 10,000 cavalry and light infantry under Ferdinand von Wintzingerode was tasked with pursuing him to convince him that the Coalition forces had taken his bait – in reality, they continued to converge on Paris.

On 25 March, Marshals Auguste de Marmont and Édouard Mortier, commanding around 20,000 men between them, were confronted by Schwarzenberg as he moved westward towards Fère-Champenoise. About 5 miles (8km) separated the two French corps, and Marmont initially fell back before the allied advance, realising that he needed to link up with Mortier to have any chance of holding his ground.

Mortier, however, was under pressure himself and unable to move southwards towards Marmont. He too withdrew to the west and the two finally combined near Sommesous. Continuing to withdraw, their situation became desperate. Allied cavalry plagued them as they slogged westwards through a driving hailstorm. Harried relentlessly, they finally escaped when

Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Art

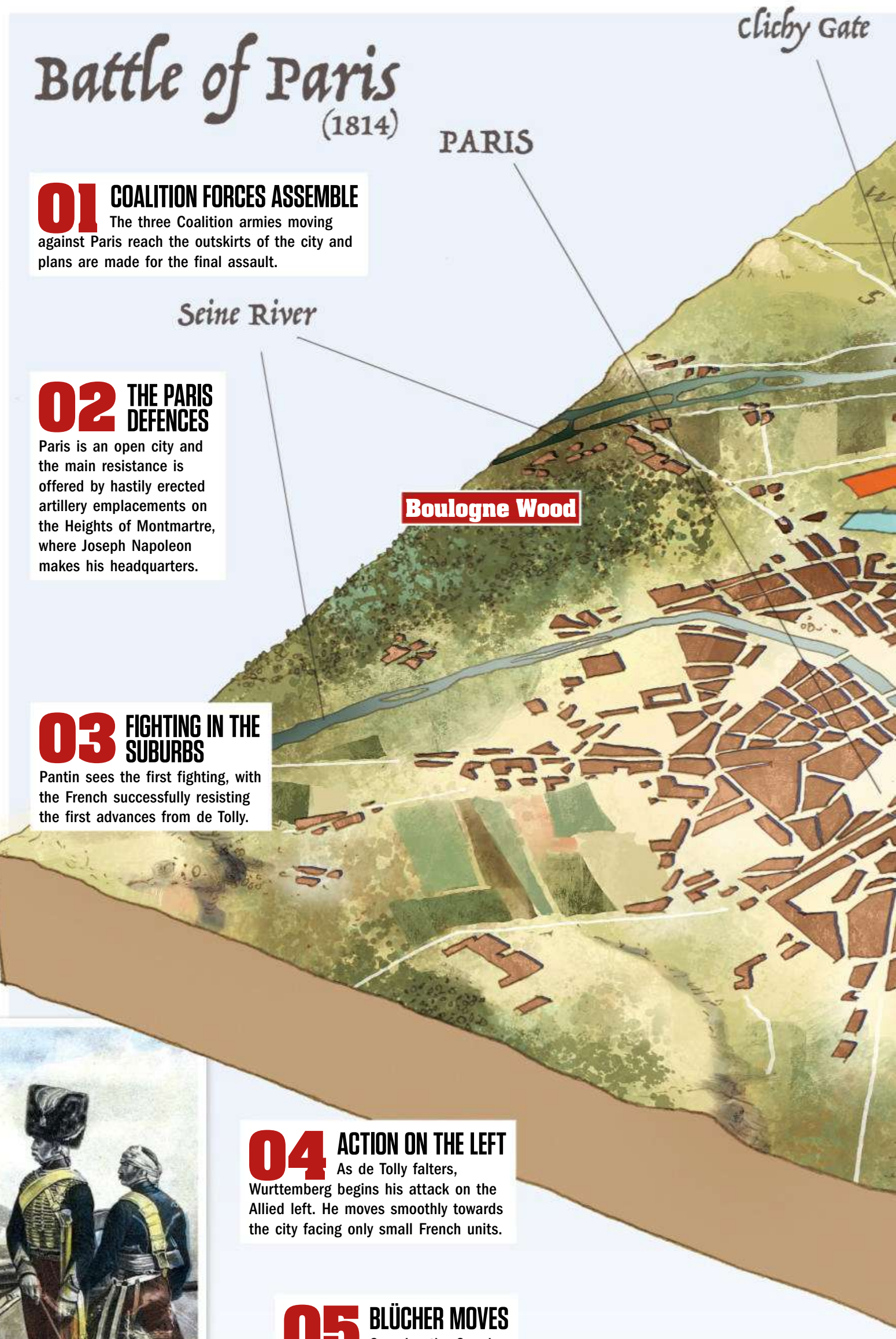
the Allies became preoccupied with a French supply train to the north. Even so, the two French marshals had lost half their force and fell back towards Paris with just 10,000 men remaining.

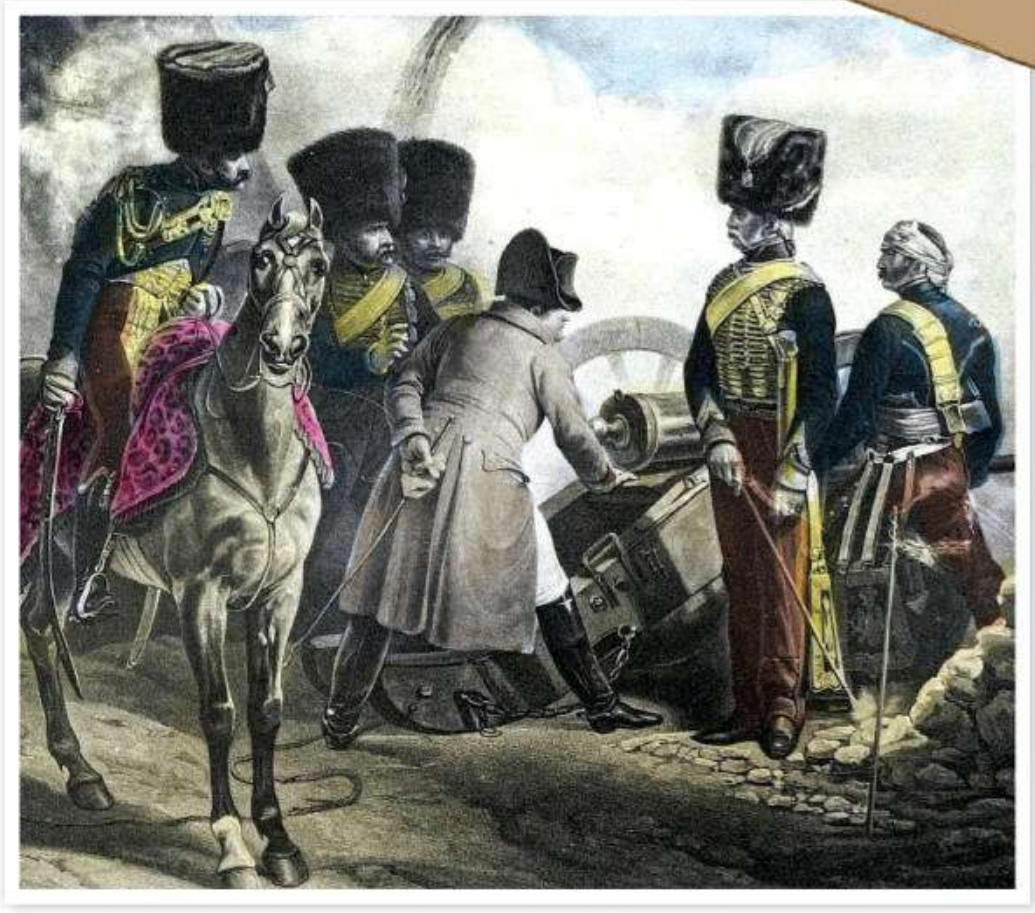
The fate of the supply column – 200 wagons of ammunition and food originally intended for Napoleon's army – was remarkable. The escorting force numbered around 4,000 and was a motley collection of National Guard units and the battered remnants of regular regiments. It is unclear if the National Guards had uniforms (they had been instructed to make use of enemy uniforms captured on the battlefield, but they were so flea-ridden that most spurned this offer). Nevertheless, the dishevelled corps, commanded by Generals Pacthod and Amey, performed heroically.

Massed Allied cavalry formations pinned the Frenchmen, forcing them to form square, while artillery units were put in place to rake them with cannon fire. Pacthod and Amey were able to keep their squares moving by temporarily forming them into column, marching a short distance, and then reforming. This prevented the enemy artillery from having a completely free hand, but as Allied cavalry numbers increased, the French were eventually surrounded and became sitting ducks. Russian cannonballs now ripped through the squares, but discipline remained intact. As squares were shattered, the survivors simply ran to neighbouring formations and continued their brave but futile resistance. Finally, there was no choice but to surrender, but the actions of the supply column had bought time to allow Marmont and Mortier to escape back to Paris with their shattered corps.

The race to the capital

Unwittingly, Napoleon had made himself a sideshow. He turned on Wintzingerode at St Dizier, but after thrashing the German general he realised there was no main army behind him. He had fallen for the Coalition's ruse and he now headed back towards Paris as quickly as he could. As the news he received became increasingly dire, he would resort to ever more


Battle of Paris
(1814)
Clichy Gate
PARIS
Seine River
Boulogne Wood
01 COALITION FORCES ASSEMBLE
The three Coalition armies moving against Paris reach the outskirts of the city and plans are made for the final assault.
02 THE PARIS DEFENCES
Paris is an open city and the main resistance is offered by hastily erected artillery emplacements on the Heights of Montmartre, where Joseph Napoleon makes his headquarters.
03 FIGHTING IN THE SUBURBS
Pantin sees the first fighting, with the French successfully resisting the first advances from de Tolly.
04 ACTION ON THE LEFT
As de Tolly falters, Wurttemberg begins his attack on the Allied left. He moves smoothly towards the city facing only small French units.
05 BLÜCHER MOVES
Crossing the Canal de l'Ourcq to get his forces into position delays Blücher's entry into the battle, but he starts to move at 1pm.
06 PRESSED ON THREE SIDES
De Tolly regathers his forces and launches a second assault, stretching the French defences.



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***Left:** Napoleon is shown inspecting an artillery position*

Map illustration: Rocio Espin

08 THE FINAL ACTION
Russian troops attack French National Guards on Montmartre, capturing the position after a ceasefire has been agreed upon.

07 MARMONT FALLS BACK
Having had a horse shot out from under him, Marmont pulls back to a second defensive line at Belleville but is unable to hold it.

desperate measures. First of all, he left his infantry and advanced with only his cavalry, then he took just a few officers with him in a mad dash to the capital, believing that his mere presence there might yet save the day.

It was to prove a doomed attempt. Paris would have to fight without the benefit of its leader. Though there was still a Bonaparte in charge, unfortunately it was the far less-capable brother of Napoleon, Joseph, who was in overall command of the capital. Napoleon was asking a lot of Joseph, who had proved ineffective when handed the throne of Spain. He also had severely limited resources at his command and equivocal instructions on how long to defend the city. Napoleon had talked boldly of defending Paris to the last man earlier in the year, but had shifted to merely insisting that it could never fall while he was alive.

Joseph was limited as far as his military capacity was concerned, but he was able to see that defending the city from the numbers marching upon it was next to impossible. He urged Empress Marie-Louise to leave and take Napoleon's son with her, but she remained until the last possible moment, only evacuating on 28 March.

A satirical cartoon depicts Blücher administering a sound thrashing to the upstart Napoleon after the fall of Paris

Coalition forces available for the assault on Paris numbered around 110,000, but only 60,000 of these were detailed for the initial attack. This was still a healthy numerical advantage as the French were scrambling to amass a serious number of men. Options were limited. On paper, there were 30,000 National Guards in the city, but most of them were unarmed and only around 12,000 were able to take part in the fighting, commanded by Marshal Moncey. The Young Guard, though nowhere near as revered as the Old Guard, would have been a solid unit, numbering 3,600 infantry and 1,500 cavalry, but most had been sent away from the city (including a detachment detailed to act as bodyguard for the empress when she left) and only 600 infantry and 300 cavalry remained to defend the city. They were thrown in with 4,000 recruits to form a division commanded by General Michel. Marshals Marmont and Mortier, still reeling from their harrowing experience at Fère-Champenoise, split overall command of the defending forces, which numbered around 40,000 including civilian volunteers and cadets.

There was still a glimmer of hope. The Allied armies were not working well together and their movements were slow at best. This was

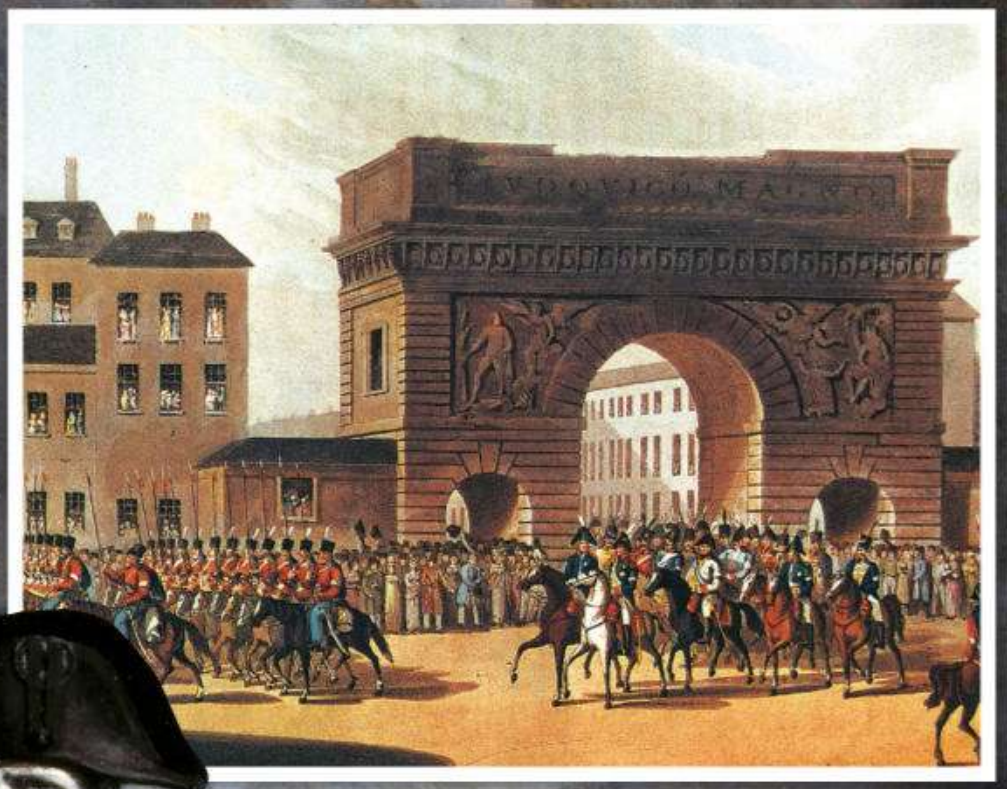
"NAPOLEON HAD TALKED BOLDLY OF DEFENDING PARIS TO THE LAST MAN EARLIER IN THE YEAR, BUT HAD SHIFTED TO MERELY INSISTING THAT IT COULD NEVER FALL WHILE HE WAS ALIVE"

French troops form squares as Russian cavalry swirls around them at the Battle of Fère-Champenoise

Gottfried Willewalde's 1834 painting of the Battle of Paris

Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Art

***Above:** The French surrender after their disastrous defence*



***Above:** Russian soldiers enter Paris after the withdrawal of French troops*

***Left:** Napoleon's eventual defeat did nothing to diminish his desire to once again rule over France*

***Above:** Napoleon bids farewell to his Old Guard as he prepares to go into exile for the first time*

***Above, right:** The Evening of the Battle of Champaubert, painted by Nicolas-Toussaint Charlet in 1814*

exemplified by the fact that it took them four days to advance on Paris after their success at Fère-Champenoise. If resistance at Paris could be stubborn, there was an outside chance that Napoleon might appear and save the day once more. Everything would depend on how efficiently the Allies attacked the city.

The defence of Paris

For both political and practical reasons, Paris had not been extensively fortified. Hasty efforts were made at this late stage, but it was nowhere near enough to present a serious impediment to the Allies.

Joseph placed his headquarters at Montmartre, outside the city limits at the time (Paris had as population of around half-a-million and covered an area roughly equivalent to the city centre today). As late as 28 March, the day the empress left the city, he placed artillery on the heights at Montmartre and Belleville. He had been ordered by Napoleon to fortify this position, but had failed to do so.

The Allies planned a three-pronged attack with their 60,000 men, with more available to be funnelled into the battle as it developed. Blücher was tasked to move against Montmartre, Barclay de Tolly aimed to capture Belleville and the Crown Prince of Württemberg was to take Vincennes as well as offer support to de Tolly if needed.

The piecemeal nature of the Allied advance played into French hands at the beginning of the battle. On the morning of 30 March, the central part of the three-pronged assault creaked into action, de Tolly hurling his men against the French troops under Marmont around the village of Pantin. French resistance was stubborn, but they were already stretched to the limit facing just one of the Coalition's corps.

By 11 am, de Tolly's advance had ground to a halt, but at the same time Württemberg moved into action on the Allied left. He made progress, capturing a bridge over the Seine at Charenton and two hours after he made his

"NAPOLEON INSISTED THAT HE WANTED ONLY PEACE, BUT HIS ENEMIES WERE UNCONVINCED"

move, Blücher was finally ready on the right of the Allied formation.

With de Tolly also renewing his advance around 1pm, the French found themselves hard pressed in three areas and simply did not have the manpower to resist. They were pushed back steadily. Marmont withdrew and when de Tolly's men took Belleville, they gained valuable high ground where they could site guns capable of reaching the city. To all intents and purposes, the defence of Paris was already over.

By this time Joseph had fled Paris, totally overwhelmed with the responsibility of mounting an effective defence. He had given Marmont and Mortier permission to negotiate a surrender if things became desperate. With enemy forces on three sides, Marmont judged that this moment had arrived and sent an aide to open discussions with Schwarzenberg.

Around the same time Mortier was handed a message from Napoleon which encouraged resistance but made it clear that fighting inside the city itself was not to be allowed. Mortier therefore sent his own representatives to negotiate a surrender.

While these negotiations took place, Montmartre came under attack from Allied cavalry. This high ground would also offer a position for artillery to bombard the city, although such considerations were on the verge of becoming irrelevant.

Schwarzenberg could afford to be generous. He offered a ceasefire if the French would withdraw their men into the city. Negotiations would then continue on the final terms of the surrender. In one of war's little tragedies, word of this agreement did not reach Mortier in time to prevent him from fighting to defend Montmartre from a Russian advance. The position fell after the battle, and the war, had already effectively ended.

The aftermath

Napoleon had reached Fontainbleau when he received news that the defenders of Paris had surrendered. He briefly considered continuing the struggle, especially when elements of the Paris garrison joined him. The terms offered by the Coalition forces had been magnanimous. The Russian emperor in particular showed restraint, Alexander resisting the temptation to do to Paris what Napoleon had done to Moscow in 1812. Marmont and Mortier had been allowed to leave the city, as long as they were gone by 6am on 31 March. No pursuit would be made until 9am.

Absorbing the remnants of the Paris army would have given Napoleon sufficient men to cause mischief, but Marmont decided enough was enough and kept his corps around Paris, pledging allegiance to a new pro-Bourbon government. When others of his marshals insisted to Napoleon that the game was up, going so far as to refuse an order to march, he reluctantly agreed to abdicate.

Napoleon then began his first exile, on the island of Elba. It was to prove short-lived and he would remain on Elba for less than a year. He had been granted a generous pension of two million francs per year, as well as sovereignty over the island, but as the Allies argued among themselves over the new map of Europe, and with rumours swirling that he was about to be moved to a less pleasant place of exile, he made his last desperate bid to rule France.

Napoleon insisted that he wanted only peace, but his enemies were unconvinced, and the Seventh Coalition was quickly formed. Napoleon's last campaign would last just 100 days and would end with defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

FURTHER READING

- Ralph Ashby, *Napoleon Against Great Odds: The Emperor and the Defenders of France, 1814*
- Gunther Rothenberg, *The Napoleonic Wars*

Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Art

WILHELMINA DUTCH COURAGE

As WWII ravaged the Netherlands and the Dutch found themselves living a nightmare under Nazi domination, Wilhelmina became a beacon of hope

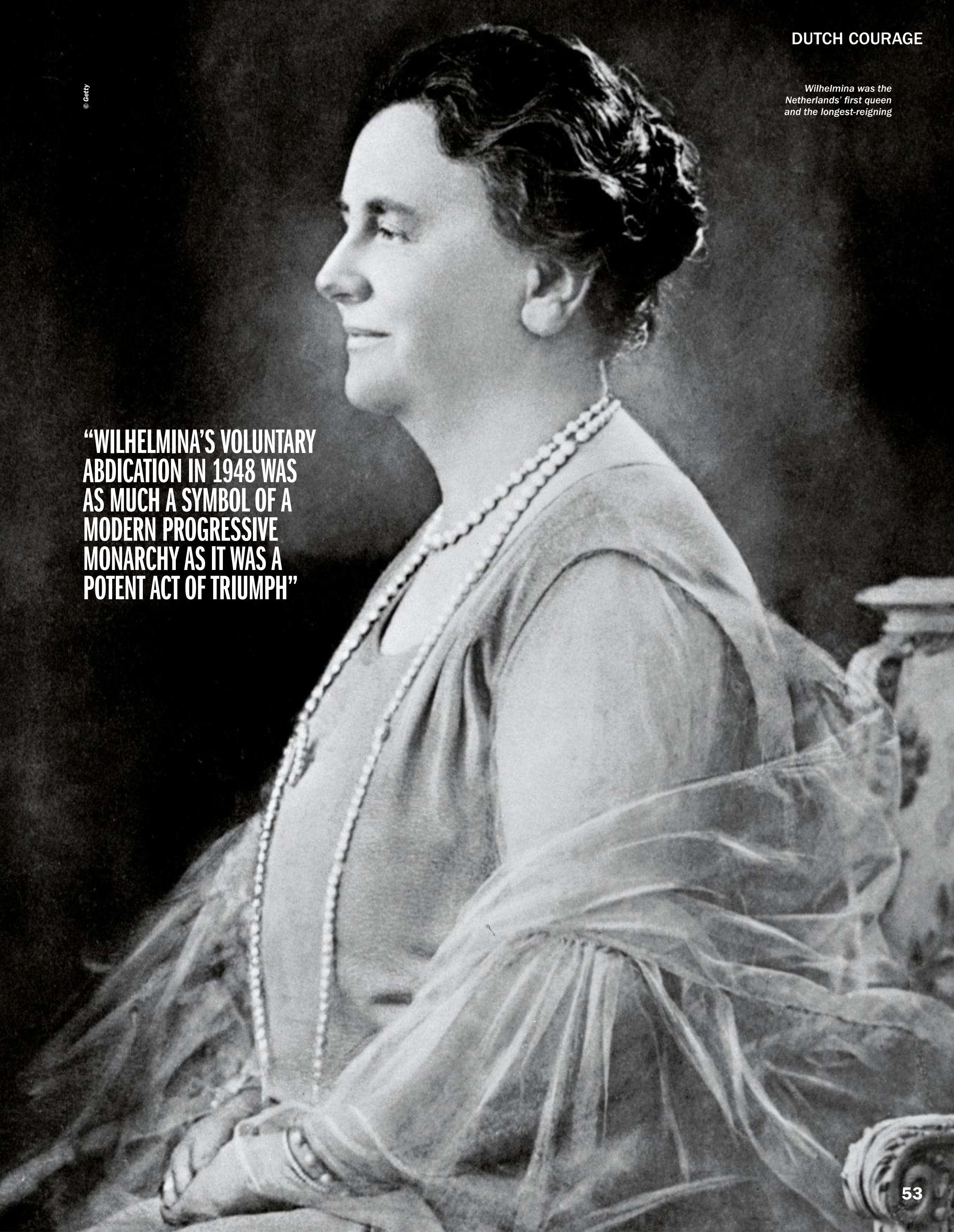
WORDS **HARRY CUNNINGHAM**

There are many remarkable things about Queen Wilhelmina's life and reign. The fact that she took the throne in the first place was extraordinary in itself – because of the semi-Salic law which governed the succession she was preceded by an elder brother and a great uncle; and her fiery, outspoken character in an age when women still had few rights and people feared the absolutist pull of a political monarch made her story even more incredible. But perhaps the most remarkable thing about the very first queen regnant of the Netherlands was that the institution she embodied for nearly 58 years survived at all. Wilhelmina's voluntary abdication in 1948 was as much a symbol of a modern progressive monarchy as it was a potent act of triumph, a message to the world that, having weathered the storm of extremism that rocked the continent and brought down so many of her royal neighbours, she was free to lay down the crown at a time of her choosing.

Wilhelmina was born in 1880 when the Netherlands was not a major player on the world stage. The country was neighboured on one side by a recently unified and imperially ambitious Germany, and on the other by the UK, a global, industrialised superpower with a monarchy stretching back nearly 1,000 years and an empire on which the sun never set. The Austro-Hungarian Empire in the east was also vast and expansive.

A strictly monarchical system was also a relatively new concept to the Netherlands. For much of its history it had been a somewhat fractious republic, perhaps in part due to it being a forward-thinking melting pot of intellect, commerce and trade in Early Modern Europe. A stadtholder, or steward, who took the title prince of Orange had once ruled the country, but after Napoleon was defeated in 1815, William I declared the Netherlands a kingdom and installed himself as king.

Dutch kings, therefore, often struggled for identity and prestige alongside the monarchs of these grand imperial



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Wilhelmina was the Netherlands' first queen and the longest-reigning

"WILHELMINA'S VOLUNTARY ABDICATION IN 1948 WAS AS MUCH A SYMBOL OF A MODERN PROGRESSIVE MONARCHY AS IT WAS A POTENT ACT OF TRIUMPH"

Wilhelmina with her mother, Queen Emma, who was in the final few months of her regency

Queen Wilhelmina in coronation robes. Dutch monarchs are inaugurated, not crowned, but they do wear coronation robes to their inauguration

powers. Although at the start of the 19th century this made the Netherlands appear a relatively weak and small nation, the fact that the Dutch did not join in with the politics of expansionism through the alliance system meant that the nation was in a stronger position at the end of World War I.

Wilhelmina had a happy childhood. King William III was a doting father and by all accounts a kind man. However, he was gravely ill – reading between the lines it appears he had dementia, though because of the sensitive nature of the condition it was not widely referred to or understood in the terms it is today. As a result Wilhelmina gradually saw less and less of her father.

At the same time, her chances of inheriting the throne from her father grew stronger. Prince Frederick, Wilhelmina's great uncle – her grandfather's brother – passed away in 1881 and in 1884 her own half brother Alexander, Prince of Orange, also died. Wilhelmina was now poised to take over the throne. Sadly, however, King William was in no position to coach his daughter in the intricacies of how to be a successful monarch, training that she, more than any other Dutch monarch, could have benefited from. He died in 1890.

Wilhelmina pictured at some point in the 1890s

In her autobiography, Wilhelmina recalls the day that she succeeded to the throne:

"From that moment many things changed, particularly in my own life. My undisturbed playing had come to an end; I had to be present all the time when Mother received people who came to offer their condolences. And that deathly silence everywhere, and the closed shutters, all those black figures with long veils, in the house too, and, worst of all, Mother so sad and wrapped in such a terrifying lot of crape! It was more than I could bear."

From the age of ten until she reached the age of majority in 1898, the country was left in the hands of Wilhelmina's mother, Queen Emma of Waldeck and Pyrmont, an exceptionally kind-hearted and strong woman who would become a role model for Wilhelmina.

But Queen Wilhelmina's reign would be blighted and dominated by war. Although the Netherlands had stayed neutral throughout World War I, it was a feat only managed by commitment to international law. The army was mobilised and Wilhelmina herself had to be careful that her movements

“I HEREBY RAISE A FIERCE PROTEST AGAINST THIS UNEXAMPLED VIOLATION OF GOOD FAITH AND OUTRAGE UPON ALL THAT IS PROPER BETWEEN CIVILISED STATES”

could not be interpreted as support for either side. As a result, when World War I came to an end and other European nations were recovering, the Netherlands, whose industries had not been completely obliterated, was able to capitalise on the trade opportunities.

Because a policy of neutrality had worked so well for the Netherlands in World War I, many in the government believed they would be able to stay out of World War II, that is, right up until Hitler invaded Poland. Queen Wilhelmina herself writes in her book how “only at that moment did many people in Holland recognise the danger that threatened them. They had been quietly asleep on the pillow called neutrality.” Over the coming months Hitler and the Nazis, together with the Soviet Union, with whom they had signed a pact with in 1939, marched through Eastern Europe with unstoppable force, setting their sights first on parts of Scandinavia and then inevitably on Western Europe. Despite clear promises that Dutch neutrality would once again be maintained, German forces crossed the border on 9 May 1940. Queen Wilhelmina was staying in her official residence: the Huis ten Bosch Palace in The Hague. Paratroopers were dropped onto the city and an aircraft crashed into a nearby park. It was obvious that the Dutch royal family were the target.

From an air raid shelter in the early hours of the morning on 10 May, Wilhelmina addressed her people:

“I hereby raise a fierce protest against this unexampled violation of good faith and outrage upon all that is proper between civilised states. I and my government will continue to do our duty. You will do yours, everywhere and in all circumstances, each in the place he occupies, with the utmost vigilance and the inner peace and devotion which a clear conscience affords.”

It had always been Wilhelmina’s plan to evacuate her daughter, Princess Juliana, and her children to safety in Britain, but Wilhelmina herself had hoped to remain in the country for solidarity’s sake. Princess Juliana, her husband Prince Bernhard and their two children were evacuated to the UK, a risky mission since their ship did not have cover by the air force. The following day when the Germans had virtually taken the country, another ship arrived to take Wilhelmina. But unlike her daughter, she had wanted to go to the south of the country, to Zeeland Flanders. But by the time they had set sail the situation was so dire that Wilhelmina’s safety could not be guaranteed if they landed in the Netherlands. Wilhelmina tearfully accepted this and the ship headed for Britain, where she was met by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, who invited her to stay at Buckingham Palace.

Wilhelmina felt that it was her duty to stay in the Netherlands and was worried that her departure might cause resentment. As a monarch she had the privilege of being able to leave of her own free will, but many Dutch citizens, including many Jews, had no choice but to stay and bear the brunt of Hitler’s cruel regime. Such a disconnect between the monarchy and the people had already led to the overthrow and murder of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and his entire family in 1918 and the flight of King Alfonso XIII of Spain and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, among others. Wilhelmina was deeply concerned about this disconnect, not just because it had the potential to jeopardise her own personal position as monarch, but because she knew that without a symbol – a beacon of light in this gravest of crises – then her people might turn against one another and allow the dark politics of nationalism to prosper.

In response to these fears, Wilhelmina put out a statement of intent within hours of arriving in Britain. The statement explained her decision to retreat to the UK, reassured the Dutch people that the government would still function in exile, and explained that the overseas territories were still under Dutch control. It ended with the following rousing commitment:

“The Netherlands will recover its entire European territory with God’s help. Remember the disasters of former centuries which the country overcame, and do all you can in the best interests of the nation, as we shall on our part. Long live the Fatherland.”

After the departure of Princess Juliana and her children from Britain to Canada, Wilhelmina resided first in Eaton Square and then Chester Square, both in London, where she set up the government in exile. With Parliament effectively dissolved, the relationship between the Crown and the executive was more to Wilhelmina’s liking; without fear of being reproached or causing a constitutional crisis, she could have more of an influence on how to tackle Hitler. The conservative Prime Minister Dirk Jan de Geer, who had begun a second nonconsecutive term in 1939, felt that the war was all but lost and that the government

Queen Wilhelmina pictured during WWII at her summer residence in Lee, Massachusetts, 1942

Images © Alamy, Getty, Creative Commons / Wiki / PD

The Huis ten Bosch Palace in The Hague, where Wilhelmina was staying in the days leading up to the Nazi invasion

had to begin negotiating with Hitler in order to secure a favourable peace agreement. He and other members of the cabinet also believed that the government in exile should be moved to the Dutch colony of Batavia in the East Indies. Wilhelmina was not impressed. Soon after she informed him that she no longer had confidence in him. He resigned without resistance and she appointed Pieter Sjoerds Gerbrandy in September 1940. With a new premier in place, Wilhelmina set about trying to connect with her people in the Netherlands through a series of radio broadcasts on Radio Oranje, named after the royal house of Orange to which she belonged. The radio programme was also broadcast by the BBC.

Wilhelmina felt that one of the biggest challenges of the war was that her people, like all those in Europe, felt a sense of hopelessness and despair. Such a feeling could have a detrimental effect on any resistance to Hitler. In order to boost morale and give the people something to look forward to, she devised a reform programme for the Netherlands with Gerbrandy that would be rolled out when the Allies won the war. She promised to listen to her people and create a new world following liberation. And she also offered specific proposals. For instance, she called for the colonies in the West Indies and elsewhere to be treated as equal partners.

“NOW, UNITED WITH HER PEOPLE BY A COMMON CAUSE, WILHELMINA COULD BECOME THE QUEEN AND LEADER SHE HAD ALWAYS WANTED TO BE”

For all her life Wilhelmina had been constrained, muzzled by her role as a constitutional monarch, a sacrosanct doctrine. Any flirtation with straight-talk, hyperbole or controversy had always been overridden by the need for statesmanship and unity, and the burning flame of her political opinions had to at least appear as if it had been permanently extinguished, however strong the sense of feeling. But now, united with her people by a common cause, Wilhelmina could become the queen and leader she had always wanted to be. She referred to Germans as “the Huns” and gave frank advice about all aspects of war policy, including the decision of the Allies to align themselves with Russia.

In a radio broadcast on 22 June 1941, the day Germany launched Operation Barbarossa and invaded Russia, she declared: “Today it is Russia, but we know that tomorrow or the day after the mighty bulwarks of our civilisation and of the principles that are sacred to us, the British Empire and the United States of America, will face the full impact of Hitler’s war machine. For this reason we shall also fight side by side with the people of Soviet Russia, wherever circumstances may demand it. We shall do this without denying our views of Bolshevism, which are based on our principles: for we must never forget that we reject the principles and practice of Bolshevism unreservedly.”

The effect of these broadcasts was overwhelming. Dutch historian Louis de Jong explained: “Those who had been lukewarm about the monarchy or who had even opposed it, changed their feelings and consequently their opinions.

THE HEIR IN EXILE

During WWII Wilhelmina's daughter, Princess Juliana, took refuge in Canada

The Dutch royal family in exile in Ottawa, Canada

Shortly after Wilhelmina joined her daughter in London, plans were made to send Princess Juliana and her daughters to safety Canada in anticipation of a Nazi invasion of Britain. Juliana's husband, Prince Bernhard, would join them in 1941. Wilhelmina would stay in London for as long as possible, where she would set up the government in exile. If Britain was invaded, she would try to join her daughter, but if this was not possible the Dutch queen's private secretary had orders to shoot Wilhelmina.

Juliana went to stay with Wilhelmina's cousin, Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, in Ottawa. At the time the countess' husband, the earl of Athlone, had just been appointed the governor general. The Dutch royal family were worried that because they had fled their homeland they would be seen as traitors to their country and anti-monarchist sentiment might flare up. Juliana understood the importance of reassuring her people, so in a radio broadcast made shortly after her arrival in Canada she spoke to reassure the Dutch people. "Do not give me your pity," she said. "Pity is for the weak and our terrible fate has made us stronger than ever before." Juliana also made every effort to be visibly involved with the war effort from afar, visiting the Dutch colonies in South America and donating blood.

In 1943, Juliana was heavily pregnant with her third child. This was a potentially complicated situation because if Juliana gave birth in Canada, the child would be granted Canadian citizenship, which would have proved highly complicated if the child was a boy and superseded Juliana's two elder daughters. The Dutch government found a solution by temporarily granting the maternity ward of the hospital 'international territory' status.

Images © Alamy, Getty, Creative Commons / Wiki / PD

Wilhelmina crossing the Belgian-Dutch border in order to go into liberated Dutch territory and join her subjects in 1945

HITLER'S NETHERLANDS

Life for Wilhelmina's subjects under the Führer was unimaginably bleak

As a Nazi invasion of Holland became a reality, thousands of Jewish people attempted to flee to Britain and join their queen. Those that didn't get away in time either had to go into hiding – like Otto Frank and his family including his daughter, Anne, who hid in the secret annexe of the house where he worked – or try to resist the new regime.

As historian Louis de Jong explains, at first "the Nazis didn't want any resistance; they insisted on compliance" and they created "a situation akin to the one that had been realised in Germany, in which the non-Jewish majority would take little notice of what happened to Jews". One of the methods used to do this was by making assisting Jews – in any way – a crime. But the Dutch people did not give up. When the Nazis murdered 400 Jews in broad daylight, there was a huge public protest involving virtually the entire workforce of Amsterdam. The protest lasted for two days.

Realising they could not simply deport every Dutch Jew without a serious fight, the Nazi leadership began to rely on more devious tactics. Nazi officials deliberately understated the true extent of the Holocaust. They insisted that Jews were being deported to labour camps and not murdered en masse. Those already in the camps were ordered to write letters home, telling their families and friends that they were being treated well. This disinformation campaign was also used to persuade the Jewish Council and the churches to appease the regime in return for concessions for certain Jewish groups, though the Nazis often reneged upon these promises.

Although a highly organised resistance campaign, supported by the Dutch people, was quickly established, little could be done to save the Jewish population. Queen Wilhelmina even received intelligence that Hitler was planning to liquidate all Dutch people because of their refusal to appease his sinister and oppressive regime.

When the Netherlands was finally liberated by the Allies in May 1945, the Dutch people had to come to terms with the fact that, despite their resistance, 112,000 Jewish people – most of the country's Jewish population – had been systematically murdered.

"HITLER WAS PLANNING TO LIQUIDATE ALL DUTCH PEOPLE BECAUSE OF THEIR REFUSAL TO APPEASE HIS SINISTER AND OPPRESSIVE REGIME"

The city of Rotterdam in ruins, taken during the invasion of the Netherlands in 1940

Crowds flock to the streets on Liberation Day in 1945

One might say that at last, virtually the entire nation accepted Queen Wilhelmina as their queen." In 1942, after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Wilhelmina was able to visit the United States and meet President Franklin D Roosevelt. With the United States entering the war, the international treaties which prevented a neutral party entering into any lengthy discussion or offering assistance to the Allies were lifted. After perhaps one of the bleakest periods in European history – in which Hitler seemed almost certain to win – the tables had turned and things were looking up.

It is not surprising, then, that as the fortunes of the Allies turned around and it became more apparent that the war would soon come to an end, Wilhelmina attempted to capitalise on her incredible public approval ratings by trying to secure more autonomy for herself. She reached out to the underground resistance movements, hoping they would form a government or at least stand for election as a new party that would be more sympathetic towards her views. Dutch politicians were naturally against such a move but so too were members of the resistance, many of whom had differing ideas about how to proceed.

The contempt the Nazis held for the Dutch people because of their part in obstructing the Third Reich cannot be overstated and, as liberation approached, Wilhelmina realised she would return to a country devastated in ways she could not imagine. The optimistic, rousing tone of her broadcasts had never been more important. On 28 November 1944 she gave a speech decrying the cruelty and oppression of the regime and implored the Dutch people to "help each other and go on helping". She continued: "You are aware of my great confidence in the resistance of our whole people." On Christmas Day 1944 she reminded her people of Jesus' sacrifice and the messages of Christmas, and on 24 February 1945 she read out the poem *Not In Vain* by the Dutch poet Klaas Hanzen Heeroma, which features the poignant lines:

But if I live to see the liberation
And cheer the victory parade,
God, tell me that this suffering,
This sorrow shall not be betrayed
And resurrect this nation, finer, wiser,
Than when it went to meet its fate.

By 13 March 1945, Wilhelmina was finally able to enter the Netherlands. In her autobiography she writes: "Wherever I went, the same emotion and enthusiasm. Everywhere flowers, presents and all sorts of attentions. In every town and village, resistance workers and widows and children of fallen underground fighters were presented to me at my special request…" Wilhelmina also stopped at a bridge in Zeeland Flanders where just hours before the Nazis had executed some soldiers. It was a poignant moment. She got out of her car, took the marguerite (white daisy) off her coat and laid it down. Given everything that had happened and the desolate, even barren nature of the country that the Nazis had left behind, the atmosphere Wilhelmina describes was remarkable. By May 1945, as Germany finally fell, the Dutch government had been restored and the people were able to begin the long, arduous task of rebuilding their country. A year later a general election returned a parliament of virtually the same composition as 1939.

Thanks to Wilhelmina's unwavering loyalty and her carefully delivered broadcasts, the spirit of the Dutch people remained strong throughout one of Europe's darkest periods, and when she relinquished her crown in 1948 in favour of Princess Juliana, after 57 years on the throne, she cemented her place as, arguably, the Netherlands' greatest monarch.

Queen Wilhelmina making her first Christmas radio broadcast since the Netherlands had been liberated, in January 1946

FURTHER READING

- *HRH Princess Wilhelmina of The Netherlands, Lonely But Not Alone*, Hutchinson & Co, 1960
- Louis de Jong, *The Netherlands And Nazi Germany*, Harvard University Press, 1990

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Heroes of the Medal of Honor

TIBOR RUBIN

During the Korean War, a GI of Hungarian-Jewish background performed numerous acts of bravery – all in the face of fierce antisemitism – to become the only Holocaust survivor to receive the Medal of Honor

WORDS **ALEX BOWERS**

Fifteen-year-old Tibor Rubin watched as American soldiers entered Mauthausen concentration camp on 5 May 1945. The stench of death and disease greeted the 11th Armored Division's liberators, a smell that the Hungarian-Jewish teenager knew all too well after surviving 14 hellish months imprisoned in the camp. The boy's father – a veteran of World War I and former POW in Russia – had died in Buchenwald. Meanwhile, his stepmother and one sister had been sent to the gas chambers in Auschwitz. He and his other siblings were orphans, alone in a strange world but alive, nonetheless. Standing in awe of medics providing comfort and care, Rubin found himself overcome with gratitude. It was in that moment that he vowed to repay the debt by one day joining the US Army, serving alongside those who had saved his life and returned to him his freedom.

Three years later, in 1948, Rubin arrived in New York City to make good on his promise. Though his limited English-speaking skills initially prevented his enlistment into the forces, he succeeded in 1950 and became part of the 8th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division. His basic training began in the United States before the company shipped out to Japan. There, Rubin came to the sobering realisation that not all of his American comrades were free of the prejudice that had once driven Nazi doctrine, the most vocal of whom was his newly assigned master sergeant. In the subsequent weeks and months, especially following the outbreak of the Korean War in June of that year, it became abundantly clear that the NCO was a fervent antisemite who took great pleasure in showcasing his hatred towards Jews. This hatred soon threatened to have deadly consequences, when the unit headed into combat in South Korea's Pusan Perimeter.

***Above:** Tibor Rubin received his long-overdue Medal of Honor from President George W Bush on 23 September 2005 – some 55 years after his heroics*

By 23 July 1950, Rubin had already embarked on several perilous patrols and impossible missions ordered by his NCO in the apparent sadistic hope that he'd be killed – except each time he'd returned unscathed. Now, however, with the planned withdrawal of the company and an expected North Korean advance, the master sergeant sent Rubin alone to guard a munitions cache located on a hillside. A scattering of foxholes was all that stood between him and the enemy, so Rubin did the only thing he could: prepare for an attack. He went to every position and stowed hand grenades and ammunition for the two machine gun emplacements. Armed

Images: Alamy, Wiki / PD / Gov

Rubin dedicated his Medal of Honor to all prisoners of war

"TED STOOD UNDER FIVE FOOT FIVE INCHES, BUT WHAT HE DID NOT HAVE IN HEIGHT HE MADE UP FOR IN TENACITY AND PURE GUTS"

Michael B Berman,
President of the National Museum of American Jewish Military History

with his rifle, he then waited for what felt like the inevitable. An all-too-familiar fear of death gripped him like it had at the Austrian concentration camp where, on his first day, an SS officer had insisted: “None of you will get out of here alive.” The Nazi at Mauthausen had been wrong about that, and Rubin intended to prove the master sergeant that he was wrong as well.

In the early hours, moonlight in the valley revealed around 100 North Korean soldiers manoeuvring towards his defences. Bugles sounded a short distance away, followed in quick succession by the cries and shouts of charging men. Rubin started throwing hand grenade after hand grenade, constantly moving between foxholes to give the enemy the impression that they were up against a sizable force. He next manned a machine gun until mortar fire zeroed in on him. The lone GI grabbed his rifle, fired into the darkness, and sprinted towards the second emplacement to continue his barrage.

Having succeeded in keeping the North Koreans pinned down until the full light of day, Rubin returned to his company to report to his NCO. The master sergeant refused to believe the story, but with the need to retrieve the munitions cache, it quickly became evident what had transpired upon the sight of a hill carpeted in dead and wounded. Rubin’s company commander, seeing the actions of someone who had gone above and beyond the call of duty, instructed

***Below:** The 1st Cavalry Division landing at P’ohang-dong, Korea, in July 1950. Within days, Rubin would prove his strength of spirit in the Pusan Perimeter*

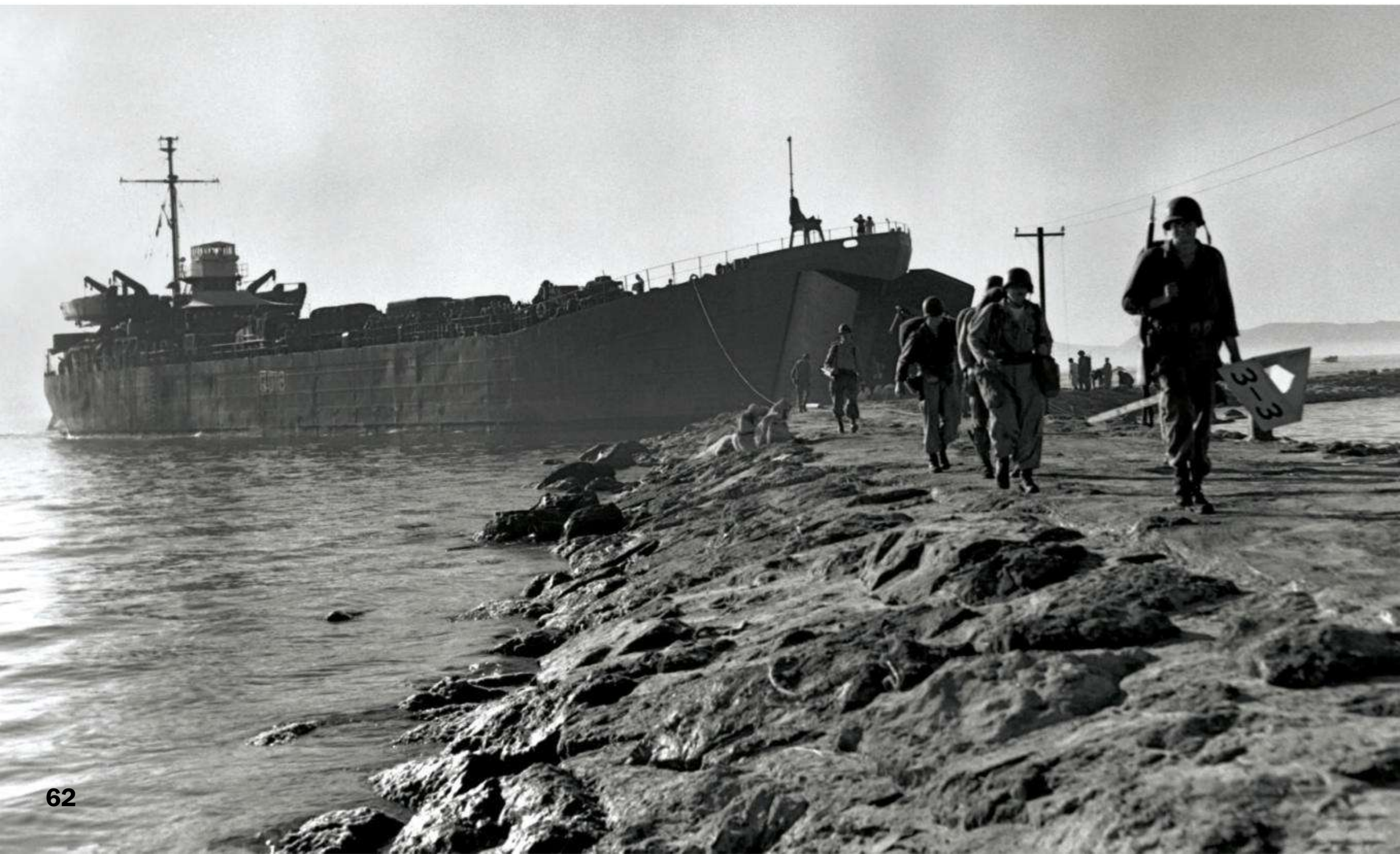
“IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE, [RUBIN] INSPIRED HIS COMRADES WITH HIS FEARLESSNESS. AND AMID THE INHUMANITY OF A CHINESE PRISONER OF WAR CAMP, HE GAVE THEM HOPE… BY REPEATEDLY RISKING HIS OWN LIFE TO SAVE OTHERS, CORPORAL RUBIN EXEMPLIFIED THE HIGHEST IDEALS OF MILITARY SERVICE”

President George W Bush

the NCO to draw up papers for a Medal of Honor recommendation. Unfortunately, the officer would be killed in action three days after Rubin’s heroic exploits and the documents were never completed.

The momentous victory during the Inchon invasion and the ultimate breakout from the Pusan Perimeter shifted fortunes in the United Nations’ favour. Nevertheless, despite the resulting advance into North Korea by UN forces, China’s entry into the conflict in support of its communist neighbour posed a colossal threat to the Americans, not least Rubin’s unit near the region of Unsan. On 30 October, the Chinese mounted a ferocious attack on the 8th Cavalry, decimating its firepower to leave a single machine gun in operation. Three soldiers had already been killed manning it when Rubin stepped into the fray. For much of the three-day battle, he tore into the enemy ranks, even after sustaining severe injuries, until he ran out of ammunition and was left with no choice but to surrender. Facing captivity for the second time in his life, he and the other prisoners were marched to Pukchin POW camp – better known as Death Valley.

The conditions at Pukchin and later at Camp 5 in Pyoktong were horrendous; the biting cold chilled to the bone, disease ran rampant and depravity from certain guards became commonplace. Worse still was the hunger. Yet Rubin’s bravery remained with him throughout the 30 months he would spend behind the wire, harnessing the same strength of spirit that he had mustered amid the horrors of the Holocaust. Under a blanket of darkness, he would sneak over the camp’s fences to steal food from supply buildings and gardens, only to then take it back to his fellow internees. Those struck by sickness he would nurse back to health with a mantra of mind over matter, in one instance presenting goat droppings as ‘medicine’ to a man on the cusp of giving up but whose faith in the treatment helped him get better. “He saved a lot of GI’s lives,” remarked Sergeant Leo Cormier, a POW at



***Above:** The prisoner exchange known as Operation Little Switch led to the repatriation of Rubin in 1953, pictured here in a stretcher*

the camp. “He gave them the courage to go on living when a lot of guys didn’t make it.” Rubin likewise took it upon himself to bury dead prisoners, whereby he recited Kaddish prayers from the Jewish tradition. Such acts he considered mitzvahs – or good deeds – that have since been credited with keeping around 40 American soldiers alive. When the Chinese learned that Rubin was from Hungary, he was offered the chance to be repatriated to his homeland behind the Iron Curtain. He refused to leave his brothers in arms and stayed with them until his release in 1953.

Discharged from the military with no official recognition of his outstanding performance of duty, Rubin instead became a US citizen and moved to California to work at his brother’s liquor store. Home life was spent with his wife, whom he married in 1963, and his two children born in the years after. Of his remaining spare time, he committed much of it to volunteering at the local veterans’ hospital.

In the early 2000s, attempts by the army to confront institutionalised racism brought about a wider initiative to reassess the contributions made by Jewish and Hispanic American personnel. Rubin was to be thrust into the spotlight when information surfaced concerning the master sergeant’s failure to submit Medal of Honor papers on his behalf. The deliberate error was corrected by President George W Bush on 23 September 2005, with the awarding of the medal some 55 years after Rubin’s remarkable actions took place. At the White House ceremony, the president said: “In the heat of battle, [Rubin] inspired his comrades with his fearlessness. And amid the inhumanity of a Chinese prisoner of war camp, he gave them hope… By repeatedly risking his own life to save others, Corporal Rubin exemplified the highest ideals of military service and fulfilled a pledge to give something back to the country that had given him his freedom.” The forgotten hero of the forgotten war was finally remembered, the blue ribbon that should’ve been received decades earlier at last hanging from the neck of a most deserving American patriot.

Tibor Rubin passed away on 5 December 2015, aged 86. To further highlight his legacy, the following year President Barack Obama signed into law legislation renaming the hospital where the veteran had volunteered after him. He is also fondly remembered by Michael B Berman, President of the National Museum of American Jewish Military History, who said: “I had the honor and pleasure of meeting Tibor (Ted) Rubin on two occasions… Ted was a humble gentleman, always proud of being a Jew and well aware that his Jewishness led him to being a Holocaust victim… As he would explain, the survival skills he learned in the German death camps, he applied in the Prisoner of War surroundings to help his fellow POWs… Ted stood under five foot five inches, but what he did not have in height, he made up for in tenacity and pure guts.”

***Above:** The Medal of Honor hero dedicated much of his time to volunteering in a veterans’ hospital*

***Below:** In 1953, after his release from a Chinese prisoner of war camp where he’d spent 30 months, Rubin returned to the United States*

Images: Alamy, Getty

SUKHOI SU-24 FLANKER

This all-weather, low-level, tactical strike jet is a Cold War era airframe still in service with several former Soviet air forces

WORDS STUART HADAWAY

EYES IN THE NOSE

The broad Orion Doppler-radar array dominates the nose and is joined by a terrain-following radar antennae below it, and a Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) array above, just below the cockpit windscreen.

SWING-WING 'GLOVES'

The 'gloves' for the swing-wings include the pivots and devices to close the slots left by the movement of the wing, while the pylons underneath can carry munitions or 3,000-litre drop tanks.

The Su-24 (NATO reporting name Flanker) is what the Soviet Union called a 'frontal bomber', designed to act at tactical and operational levels. Although capable of deep penetration and nuclear strikes, instead of cities it was intended to attack battlefield and rear area targets such as troop concentrations, logistical targets and airfields. It is optimised for high-speed and low-level attacks, and these factors dominate the overall design. Variable-geometry ('swing') wings allow rapid acceleration to supersonic speeds, while the broad fuselage was dictated by the need for a large radar dish in the nose.

In some ways the Flanker was an answer to the United States' development of the General Dynamics F-111 Aardvark, which was very similar in role and design, and which was unveiled shortly before the Flanker was commissioned. Both types would see service in the 'small wars' around the edges of the Cold War, with the Flanker first seeing combat over Afghanistan in 1984. However, the Flanker was also widely distributed across the Soviet Union, and has continued with Russian and former-Soviet states long after the retirement of the F-111. It has most recently been used by Ukraine to counter the 2022 Russian invasion.

***Above:** A Russian Su-24 taking off*

***Above, right:** The Flanker entered service across the Soviet Union from 1975*

AVIONICS IN THE TAIL

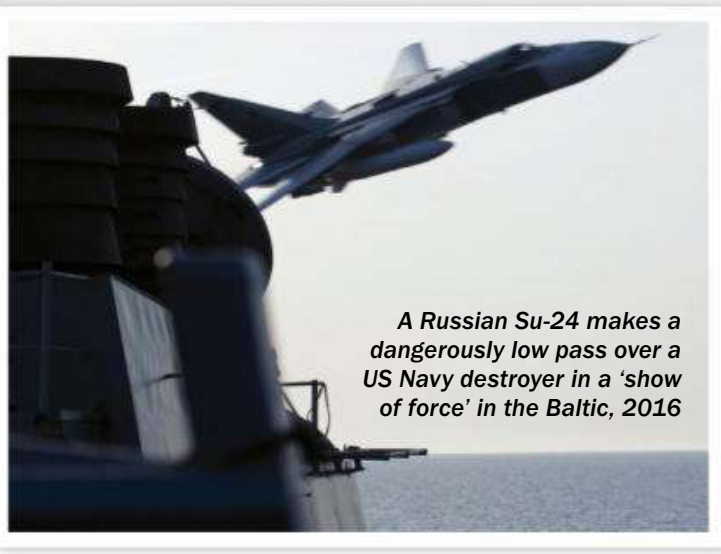
Flankers have a range of radio-navigation equipment in the leading edge and top of the tail, while the passive radar-warning equipment is also in the tip.

Illustration: Nicholas Forder Images: Alamy, Getty

ROUGH OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The undercarriage is strengthened to enable operations in rough field conditions. Other features adapted to such conditions include a retractable cover over the cannon muzzle to keep out dirt and debris from improvised runways.

"ALTHOUGH CAPABLE OF DEEP PENETRATION AND NUCLEAR STRIKES, INSTEAD OF CITIES IT WAS INTENDED TO ATTACK BATTLEFIELD AND REAR AREA TARGETS"



A Russian Su-24 makes a dangerously low pass over a US Navy destroyer in a 'show of force' in the Baltic, 2016

SUKHOI SU-24 FLANKER

COMMISSIONED	1965
ORIGIN	SOVIET UNION
LENGTH	22.6M (74FT 2IN)
WINGSPAN	17.6M (57FT 11IN)
ENGINE	2 X LYULKA AL-21 AFTERBURNING TURBOJETS, 109.8KN (24,700LBF) EACH
CREW	2
PRIMARY WEAPON	UP TO 8,000KG (17,637LB) OF AIR-DROPPED OR AIR-LAUNCHED MUNITIONS
SECONDARY WEAPON	1 X GSH-6-23 SIX-BARRELLED 23MM ROTARY CANNON

ARMAMENT

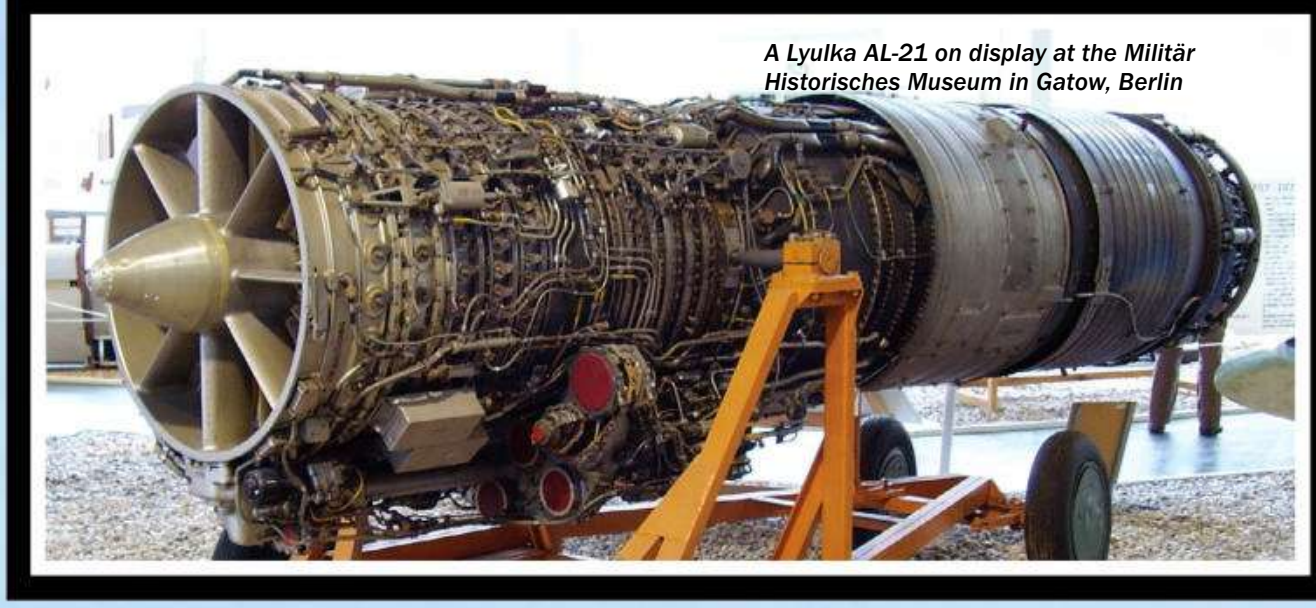
The Flanker carries a GSh-6-23 rotary cannon, with six 23mm barrels and 500 rounds of ammunition. It can also carry a staggering array of air-launched or air-dropped ordnance, carried on eight pylons – four under the central fuselage, one under each wing stub or 'glove', and one (capable of swivelling) on each outer wing – up to a total of 8,000kg (17,637lb). Air-to-air missiles can be carried for self-defence, as can anti-radiation (anti-ground defence radar) missiles, while targets can be attacked with TV or laser-guided bombs, or free fall-bombs.

***Right:** A Flanker with a range of the munitions it can carry laid out*

"THE FLANKER CAN CARRY A STAGGERING ARRAY OF AIR-LAUNCHED OR AIR-DROPPED ORDNANCE"

ENGINE

The Flanker uses two Lyulka AL-21F-3a afterburning turbojets, each rated at 76.4kN (17,175lbf) dry or 109.8kN (24,700lbf) on afterburner. The engines are fed by three internal fuel tanks, the rear one having a 'supplementary' tank between the engines, and drop tanks can also be carried. Air comes through side-mounted intakes, which initially had variable ramps to regulate air flow. These were removed early in the Flanker's career to save weight, and although this did not affect the maximum speed at low levels it did severely curtail higher altitude performance.



A Lyulka AL-21 on display at the Militär Historisches Museum in Gatow, Berlin

Its two Lyulka engines give the Su-24 immense thrust

The Flanker's design is optimised for high-speed, low-level operations

DESIGN

The role of the Flanker dictated much of its design. The need for a powerful forward-looking radar led to a large Orion radar dish, requiring a wide fuselage to accommodate it. The high speeds needed to evade enemy air defences required a variable geometry wing, swinging from a shallow 16° for low-speed flight, giving good short take-off and landing (STOL) characteristics, to a steep 69° for maximum speed during penetration and attack. The rear fuselage was moulded to the engines to reduce drag.

Su-24s can carry munitions on eight pylons – two under each wing, and four (for heavier munitions) under the fuselage

The Su-24 has a distinctive broad fuselage and swept wing design

All images Alamy / Getty / Wiki - PD - Gov

COCKPIT

The broad fuselage allows the two crewmembers to sit side-by-side in the pressurised cockpit. On the left, the pilot has a Heads Up Display, while the Weapons Systems Operator (WSO) on the right has a hooded display for their radar and (if needed) TV guidance system for bombs. Controls are repeated on both sides, for training or emergencies, and basic flight instruments are repeated on the WSO's side. The crew have an excellent view through their canopy (which is reinforced against bird strikes), and can use a highly effective terrain-following autopilot at low levels.

Ground crew prepare a Su-24's cockpit for operations, Syria 2016

The engines are fed by three internal fuel tanks, and drop tanks can also be carried

The crew of two sit side-by-side in the high cockpit

SERVICE HISTORY

After first flying in 1967, the Su-24 Flanker entered service across the Soviet Union from 1975. Its operational debut came with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1984, but the bulk of this Cold War warrior's service has come after the break up of the Soviet Union. The Russians have used the type in Chechnya in the 1990s, Georgia in 2008, and over Syria in recent years. Many former Soviet states and allies continued to operate the type. Among the latter have been Iran and Iraq, Syria (during the 1990 Lebanese Civil War as well as their ongoing civil war), Algeria, Libya (used during their 2011 civil war), Uzbekistan (used during the Tajik civil war 1992-2001), the Sudan (used over Yemen), and Algeria. Most recently, Ukraine has operated the Su-24 against invading Russian forces.

In the 1980s, variants were developed for tactical reconnaissance (Su-24MR) and electronic intelligence gathering (Su-24MP) operations.

A Ukrainian Flanker coming in to land

Russian Su-24s preparing for operations at an airbase in Syria, 2016

"THE BULK OF THIS COLD WAR WARRIOR'S SERVICE HAS COME AFTER THE BREAK UP OF THE SOVIET UNION"

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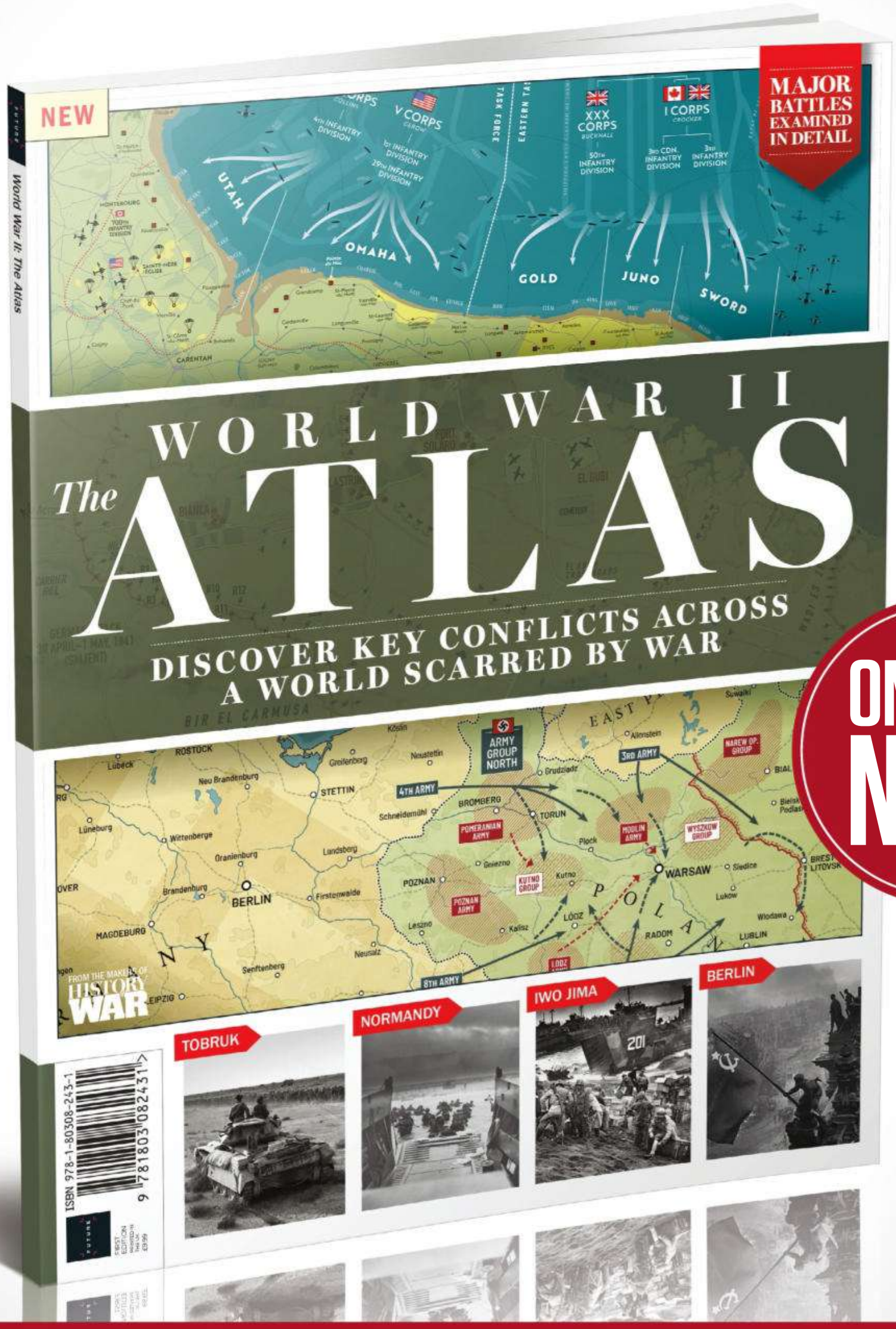
REWIND THE CLOCK AND EXPLORE A WORLD AT WAR

In this special edition bookazine from the makers of *History Of War*, explore the defining battles of the Second World War in detail, discover how pivotal leaders led their armies into fierce conflicts and much more



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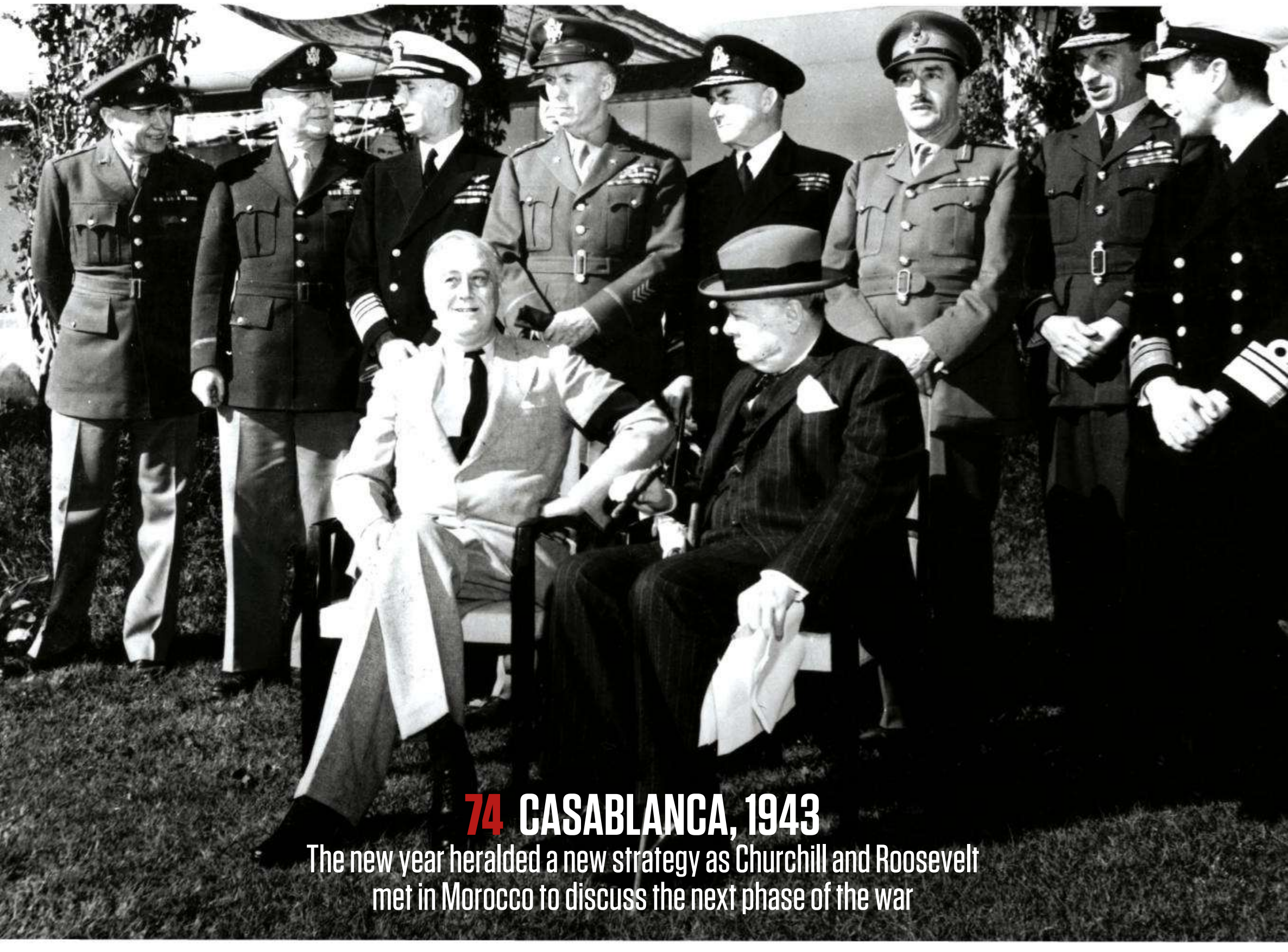

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The new year heralded a new strategy as Churchill and Roosevelt met in Morocco to discuss the next phase of the war

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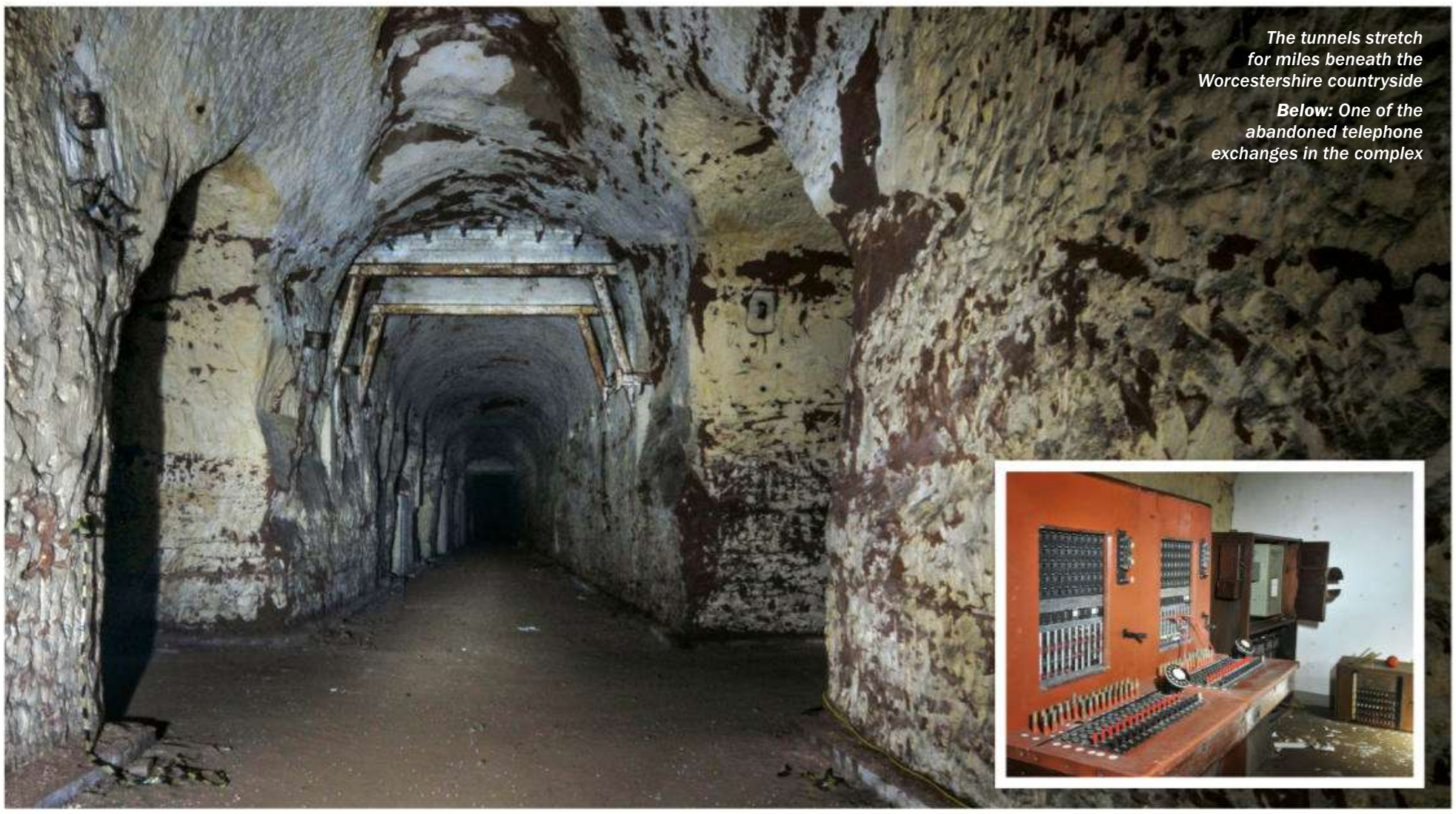
MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover Kidderminster's nuclear bunker, Newport's Roman fortress and Guernsey's museum that commemorates the island's Nazi occupation



The tunnels stretch for miles beneath the Worcestershire countryside

***Below:** One of the abandoned telephone exchanges in the complex*

Drakelow Tunnels

North Worcestershire is home to an isolated complex of tunnels that was built as a World War II factory and later became a top secret nuclear bunker for the British Government

Located underneath Kingsford Country Park north of Kidderminster, the Drakelow Tunnels are a former underground military complex. Covering 26,500 square metres in a grid system with a total length of around 5.6km, they were originally built between 1941-42 as a World War II 'Shadow Factory' for the Rover car company. Authorised by the Ministry of Aircraft Production, Rover manufactured engines for the Bristol Aeroplane Company.

Originally known as Drakelow Underground Dispersal Factory, the tunnels achieved full production in May 1943. The vital subterranean complex produced components for radial engines that were used in aircraft such as the Bristol Blenheim and Short S.25 Sunderland flying boat. The remaining space that wasn't utilised by Rover – 7,943 square metres in total – was used as an RAF stores area.

After 1945, the tunnels were used to manufacture parts for the Meteor tank engine until the site was handed over to the Ministry of Works in 1958. During the Cold War, the British Government converted half of the tunnels into a top secret facility in 1961 that was re-designated as Regional Seat of Government 9.

Drakelow became one of 13 facilities across the UK that formed a national network of classified nuclear bunkers. They would be used by the British Government to run the country in the event of a nuclear war. During the 1980s, Drakelow was re-designated as Regional Government Headquarters 9.2 and was upgraded to include blast doors and air locks. It operated under complete secrecy until the end of the Cold War and was finally decommissioned by the Ministry of Defence in 1993.

Today, the tunnels are maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers who run regular guided tours at least once a month on Saturdays. Each tour lasts approximately 45-90 minutes depending on the topic. There is a Cold War Museum in the complex with all sales and donations go straight into funding the renovation works. Some of the key areas that are being renovated include the World War II Shadow Factory area, the 1960s-80s government offices, a BT communications hub and even a BBC studio.

Due to the renovations, children under the age of 10 are not allowed due to health and safety but this will change when the renovations are complete. There is also a strict observance of no mobile phones, cameras or other recording devices within the tunnels. To access the complex, visitors are advised to meet in the tarmac woodland car park on the south side of Kingsford Lane. This is located just north of the turning for Castle Hill Lane. There are toilet facilities, and visitors are advised to wear sturdy shoes.

For more information visit: www.drakelow-tunnels.co.uk

Isca Augusta

The National Roman Legion Museum near Newport is home to the best-preserved Roman fort in Wales

Roman Wales was the farthest point west that the empire extended to in Britain. The Romans built a fortress at Isca Augusta, which is now Caerleon near Newport, Gwent. Built in 75 CE by the governor of Britain, Sextus Julius Frontinus, Isca Augusta was one of only three permanent legionary fortresses in Roman Britain and was operational for over 200 years. The name Caerleon itself is derived from the Welsh for 'fortress of the legion'.

The National Roman Legion Museum now stands inside what remains of the fortress. The ruins include the most complete amphitheatre in Britain and the only remains of a legionary barracks anywhere in Europe. The museum researches, preserves and displays half-a-million objects from Caerleon and Usk (Burrium) and their environs. This includes the oldest recorded piece of writing in Wales, which was found on the museum site, and the largest collection of Roman gemstones, discovered beneath the fortress baths. Other items include artefacts from excavations such as Roman coins, weapons and remains of uniforms.

Visitors can also experience the sights and sounds of the Roman Garden, while children can try on replica armour and experience the life of a Roman soldier in a full-sized barrack room.

Children dressed as a Roman soldiers during a visit to the National Roman Legion Museum

Caerleon Amphitheatre was built to entertain legionaries stationed at Isca Augusta

For more information visit: www.museum.wales/roman

Occupied Guernsey

The German Occupation Museum tells the story of the Channel Island's experience during World War II

The second-largest Channel Island after Jersey, Guernsey was occupied by German forces from June 1940 until it was liberated by British forces on 9 May 1945. As Crown Dependencies, the Channel Islands were the only part of the British Empire to be occupied by Nazi Germany and they suffered one of the longest occupations of WWII.

Some of Guernsey's residents were deported to Germany and three islanders of Jewish descent were killed in Auschwitz. Nearby Alderney, which is part of the Bailiwick of Guernsey, housed forced labourers in four camps that were run by the SS. They were the only concentration camps on British soil, while Guernsey itself was heavily fortified.

Located at Les Houards, within walking distance from Guernsey Airport, the German Occupation Museum tells the island's WWII story and is owned by Richard Heaume. Housed in what was his parents' cottage, the museum opened in 1966 and was originally made up of his collection of wartime objects. There is a re-created 'Occupation Street' and extensive information about the island's deportees along with a range of audio-visual displays and dioramas.

Featured items include an Enigma machine, an improvised mini cooking stove made by an islander in 1944 and a recreation of a German artillery installation that features a rare Czechoslovakian 47mm anti-tank gun.

'Occupation Street' re-creates how Guernsey would have looked during WWII, complete with German soldiers and items from the period

An anti-aircraft searchlight manned by a mannequin of a German soldier

All images © Alamy

For more information visit: www.germanoccupationmuseum.co.uk

WWII THIS MONTH...

JANUARY 1943

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, **History of War** will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place during each month of the conflict

CASABLANCA CONFERENCE

Held at the Anfa Hotel in Casablanca, French Morocco, during 14-24 January 1943, the Casablanca Conference saw US President Franklin D Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill meet to discuss Allied strategies in Europe for the next phase of WWII. With the Battle of Stalingrad still raging, Soviet premier Joseph Stalin declined to attend. The conference was also attended by Sultan Muhammad V of Morocco and representatives of Free French forces, including General Charles de Gaulle.

The main result of the conference was the Casablanca Declaration, which stated that the Allies would only accept the "unconditional surrender" of the Axis powers. Roosevelt explained what this meant in a radio address the following month: "We mean no harm to the common people of the Axis nations. But we do mean to impose punishment and retribution upon their guilty, barbaric leaders."

Images © Alamy

BATTLE OF TRIPOLI

The capital of Libya had been governed as an Italian colony since 1927 and was visited by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini in the late 1930s. It remained under Fascist Italian control during World War II until the Battle of Tripoli occurred during 22-23 January 1943. The British Eighth Army completed its 2,250km advance west from Egypt by defeating German and Italian forces commanded by Erwin Rommel and Ettore Bastico. Rommel quickly abandoned Tripoli, with the Eighth Army entering the city unopposed. General Bernard Montgomery formally received the Italian surrender and commended his soldiers: "I have nothing but praise for the men of the Eighth Army: they have done what I expected of them."

Brigadier Frederick Kisch, the highest-ranking Jew to serve in the British Army during WWII, salutes British soldiers in Tripoli, 30 January 1943

Franklin D Roosevelt and Winston Churchill pictured with American and British commanders, including US Army Chief of Staff George C Marshall

Jewish men are deported from the railway station at Marseille's Old Port

MARSEILLE ROUNDUP

During 22-24 January 1943, the Jews of Marseille were systematically deported by German forces with assistance from the Vichy French police. After the fall of France in 1940, Marseille had been a sanctuary for French citizens and foreigners under threat from the Axis powers. There were maritime escape routes, with many of those seeking sanctuary being Jewish. The collaborationist Vichy regime increased their persecution of the Jews on Heinrich Himmler's personal orders. The Old Port area of Marseille was raided, with 40,000 people's identity documents being checked. Around 2,000 Jews were forced onto trains to extermination camps, 20,000 people were expelled from the Old Port and 1,494 buildings were destroyed.

BOMBING OF WILHELMSHAVEN

A coastal town in Lower Saxony, Germany, Wilhelmshaven was home to an extensive naval base during World War II that built U-boats and repaired damaged German warships. It had been an Allied bombing target since the early months of the war, with 12 out of 22 RAF Wellington bombers being shot down in a raid on 18 December 1939. On 27 January 1943, Wilhelmshaven was the target of the first daylight bombing mission flown by the US Eighth Air Force against the German homeland. Fifty-three B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators dropped 137 tonnes of bombs on industrial plants and warehouses. Three American aircraft were lost during the raid but their precision bombing was highly effective. American and British bombers continued to attack Wilhelmshaven until 30 March 1945.

An American B-17 Flying Fortress crew pose in front of their aircraft in England before a raid on Wilhelmshaven in 1943

BATTLES OF BUNA-GONA AND WAU

Fought during 16 November 1942 to 22 January 1943, the Battle of Buna-Gona saw Australian and American forces defeat the Japanese at their beachheads at Bona and Gona in Papua New Guinea. The Allies suffered heavy casualties of 1,991 dead and over 12,000 sick or wounded, with the battle being described by US General Robert L Eichelberger as a "nightmare". The Australians also won the Battle of Wau that was fought during 29 January to 4 February 1943. They successfully defended a strategically important base after racing the Japanese to defend the position. These victories at Buna-Gona and Wau helped the Allies to secure the Territory of Papua from the Japanese.

Australian troops attack Japanese pillboxes from behind an M3 Stuart tank during the final assault on Buna, January 1943

REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books and films

ARGENTINA, 1985

A COMPELLING DEPICTION OF HOW A TEAM OF LAWYERS RISKED THEIR LIVES TO HOLD THE PERPETRATORS OF THE DIRTY WAR TO ACCOUNT

Director: Santiago Mitre Starring: Ricardo Darín, Gina Mastronicola, Francisco Bertín, Released: Out now on Amazon Prime

The Trial of the Junta, the biggest war-crimes trial since Nuremberg, was a landmark event to prosecute the generals behind the Dirty War of 1974-83.

Argentina, 1985 is a powerful exploration of Chief Prosecutor Julio Strassera and his young team in their struggle for justice in the face of obstruction, threats and political instability.

Central to the film's success is its understated tone, eschewing melodrama for a restrained, realistic portrayal befitting the events. In particular, victim testimonies are handled dutifully and compassionately.

The unease and underlying tension of this violent, unstable time in Argentina's history is also captured, as well as the shift in public sentiment against the junta.

Ricardo Darín shines in his depiction of Strassera, portraying his dogged commitment to the legal process, but also emphasising his humanity through moments of frustration and loss of composure.

"A POWERFUL EXPLORATION OF CHIEF PROSECUTOR JULIO STRASSERA AND HIS YOUNG TEAM IN THEIR STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE IN THE FACE OF OBSTRUCTION, THREATS AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY"

He's no superhero, as he tells his friend Bruzzo. However, he and his team are tasked with the thankless, terrifying but critical job of bringing justice to a country beset by division.

Perhaps most striking is the reaction of Strassera's wife Silvia (Alejandra Flechner) to a death threat: "The threat guy? He's been calling all day – I'm over it."

Clocking in at two hours and 20 minutes, the film loses some momentum around midway, but regains it for its stunning finale, capped by Strassera's closing statement.

In this, the film shows how the spirit of democracy and accountability had stirred in Argentina, despite the mixed outcome of the trial, rallying around Strassera's famous declaration "nunca más" – never again. **JH**

ABYSS

A DEEP DIVE INTO THE PERILOUS 13 DAYS DURING THE COLD WAR WHEN THE US AND USSR STOOD ON THE BRINK OF UNLEASHING A NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST

Author: Max Hastings **Publisher:** William Collins **Price:** £30 (Hardback)

After nearly three decades of East-West threats and counter-threats, snarling fist-waving and political brinksmanship, in October 1962 the world finally stood on the precipice of a nuclear holocaust. As veteran war correspondent and author Max Hastings points out, the West Berlin crisis of 1948-49, the 1950 North Korean invasion of the South and the 1956 Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Uprising, taken as threats to global devastation, rank as small beer compared with the 13 days of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

The drama of the event was unparalleled in modern American history. This reviewer, who happened to be in New York City at the time, saw women weeping openly in the streets over the fate of troops stationed at the Guantánamo Bay US naval base, as wailing air raid sirens emptied the streets of Manhattan and sent people scurrying into shelters.

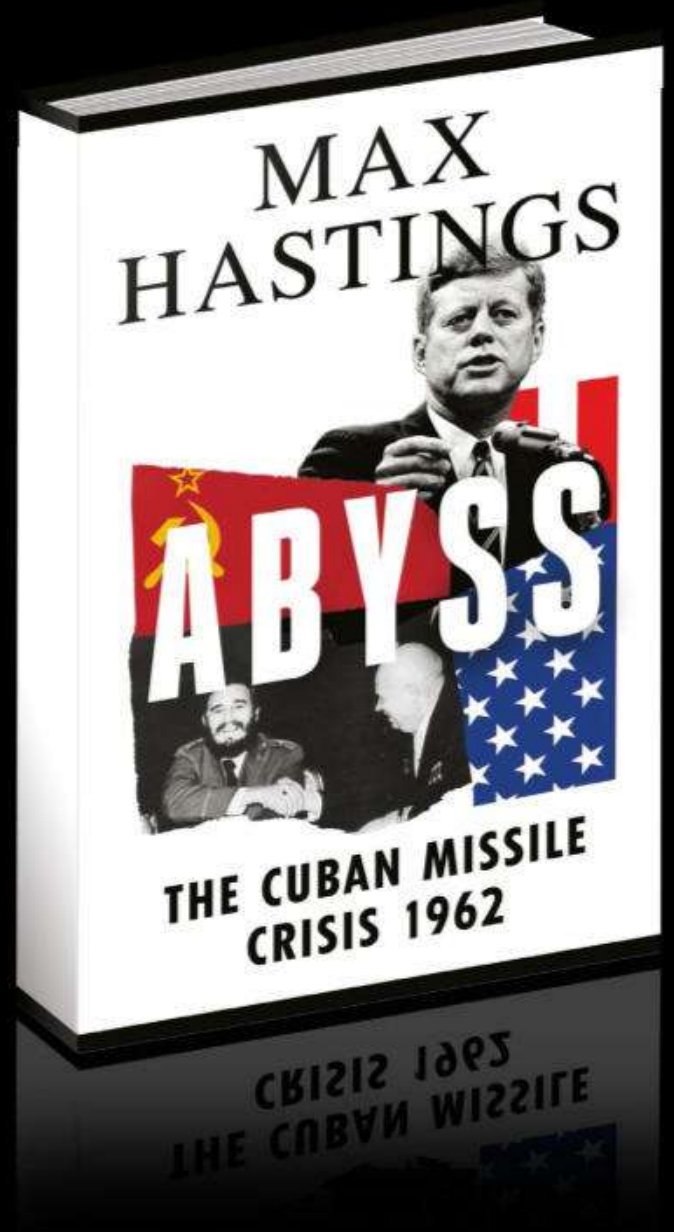
The Cuban Missile Crisis was not a spontaneous incident without an historical backdrop. It was spawned by the catastrophic CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961, launched with the aim of overthrowing Fidel Castro. The operation turned into a dismal failure that served only to solidify Castro's power in Cuba, following which the dictator requested a build-up of Soviet military aid.

Hastings takes the reader through the revolution that in 1958 saw Castro replace the right wing dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista with his own brand of tyranny. The narrative is enlivened with colourful anecdotes such as when in 1960 Castro, on a visit to the UN, found his plane had been impounded by the Americans. Who should step onto centre stage but Nikita Khrushchev, who lent him a Russian plane and in doing so planted the seeds of a game-changing political relationship. Huge posters began to adorn Havana proclaiming "Nikita-Fidel Amigos".

The Kremlin initially feared that to play war games in America's backyard could provoke an extravagant reaction in Washington. Yet, as the author highlights, this is precisely what Khrushchev did in 1962 by shipping manpower and military equipment to Cuba which, as the virulent anti-communist lobby never ceased to shout, lay only 145km from Florida. US President John F Kennedy imposed a naval quarantine to prevent further missiles from reaching Cuba. As the confrontation reached its climax, the Soviet leader grew apprehensive that the US would not only invade Cuba but launch a nuclear strike against the Soviet Union.

It is a matter of grim speculation as to whether Kennedy was prepared to risk a global nuclear conflagration by attacking the Soviet missile sites in Cuba. The reality is that Khrushchev, painfully aware of the 20 million casualties his country had suffered in World War II, in effect backed down from sending more military hardware to Castro. Moscow and Washington negotiated a deal by which the Soviets would remove their offensive weapons from Cuba in exchange for a US declaration that they would not to attempt another invasion of the island. The naval quarantine was lifted a month later.

"The crisis that had come so terrifyingly close to war thus ended," writes Hastings, "without a bang but with many whimpers." Those left unhappy over the outcome ranged from disgruntled Soviet commanders to many Cubans and US uniformed brass. Hastings concludes: "The most important fact of the struggle is that the world survived it without a nuclear catastrophe." **JS**



25 DAYS TO ADEN

THE UNKNOWN STORY OF ARABIAN ELITE FORCES AT WAR

A WELL-RESEARCHED AND ENTERTAINING ACCOUNT OF A BITTER CONFLICT AND THE MEN WHO FOUGHT IT

Author: Michael Knights **Publisher:** Profile Editions **Price:** £20 (Hardback)

The preface to this book reads like a high-octane thriller. It reimagines the moment in April 2015 when the United Arab Emirates launched a commando raid on the Port of Aden in Yemen. A more conventional historical narrative is soon established, however, one that takes us through the events leading up to that moment and the fighting that followed.

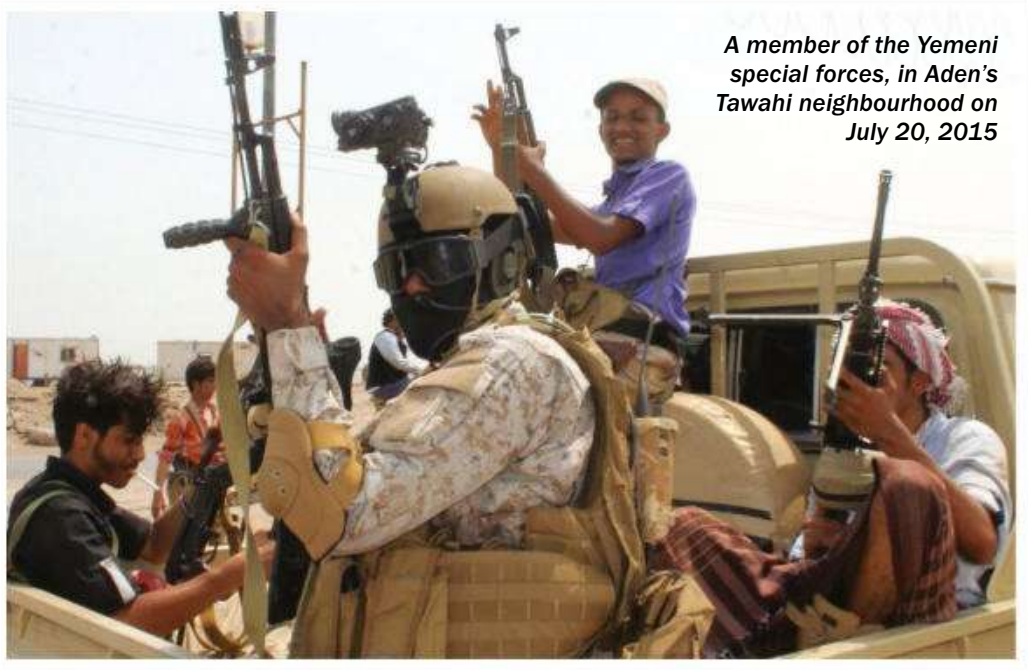
The backdrop to this story is a tangled one, and author Michael Knights does an admirable job of unpicking it. The early chapters provide a brief overview of Yemen's complex history while explaining Aden's strategic and political importance. We also get an insight into the ancient sectarian rivalries that have condemned Yemen to a state of 'forever war'.

The book then fast-forwards to the events of the Arab Spring in 2011. It explains how the country's ruthless ruler President Saleh was ousted from power only to broker an insidious deal to regain it. By September 2014, he'd joined forces with Yemen's rebellious Houthi tribes and, with the backing of Iran, had seized the capital Sanaa. By April of the following year, he was on the brink of capturing Aden and claiming victory only to be thwarted by the events described in the book.

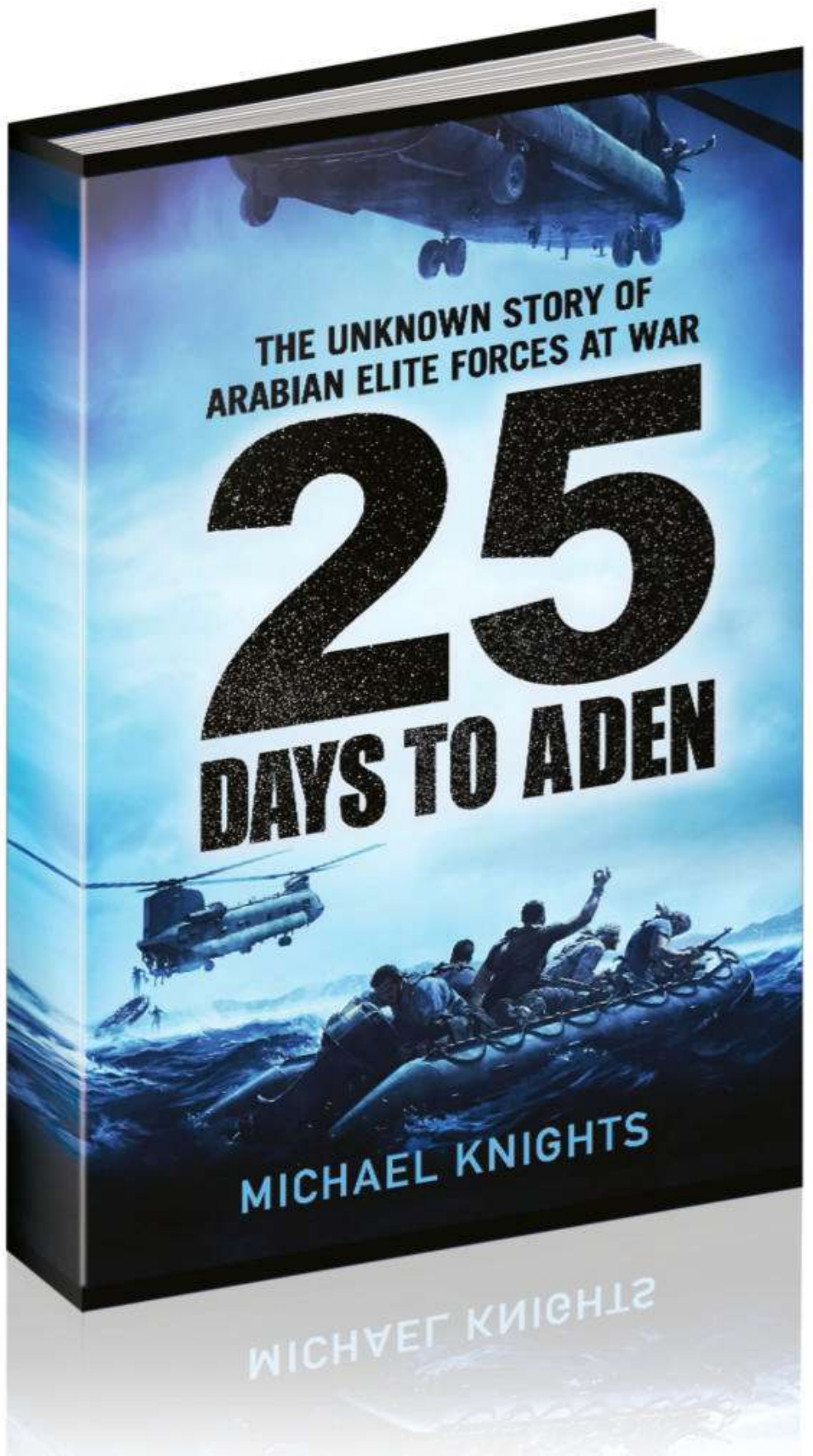
"THE BACKDROP TO THIS STORY IS A TANGLED ONE, AND AUTHOR MICHAEL KNIGHTS DOES AN ADMIRABLE JOB OF UNPICKING IT"

Although the maps scattered throughout are genuinely helpful there's neither an appendix of who's who nor a list explaining the various acronyms and initialisms used throughout. Both would have been welcome additions. That aside, this well-researched book is as absorbing as it is entertaining. A complicated tale expertly told. **NS**

***Below, left:** Yemeni special forces pictured in the Tawaji neighbourhood, July 2015*



A member of the Yemeni special forces, in Aden's Tawahi neighbourhood on July 20, 2015



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IN THE SHADOWS

***Above, left:** A British Intelligence Corps officer quizzing a man in France, during World War I*

***Above, right:** Corporal D A R Reynolds of the Intelligence Branch, working at the main Eighth Army Headquarters, Italy, 1944*

THIS DEFINITIVE STUDY OF BRITAIN'S INTELLIGENCE CORPS SHINES A LIGHT ON ITS VITAL WORK

Author: Michael Ashcroft **Publisher:** Biteback **Price:** £25 (Hardback)

Military history titles from Michael Ashcroft – better known to most as Lord Ashcroft – have never failed to impress and to hit the mark. *In the Shadows* is no exception to that rule. If anything, it is the firm opinion of this reviewer that this is Ashcroft's finest military title yet. This is in part because of the hitherto relative paucity of any good solid work on the subject, notwithstanding the significance of the Intelligence Corps within the modern British Army. But mostly that plaudit is simply down to this being a supremely engaging account. And while one hesitates to use the old cliché 'page turner', the book is just that. This reviewer certainly found it hard to put down.

Quite likely, the dearth of accessible history about the Intelligence Corps is as much to do with the secretive nature of its work as it is about anything else, with the covert modus operandi of the organisation being the very essence of this book's title.

In what is certainly the definitive work on Britain's Intelligence Corps to date, Ashcroft delves deep into the history of what is a relatively 'new' formation within the British military and gives us a vivid, visceral and truly fascinating glimpse into those shadows as well as an insight into some of the secrets they hold.

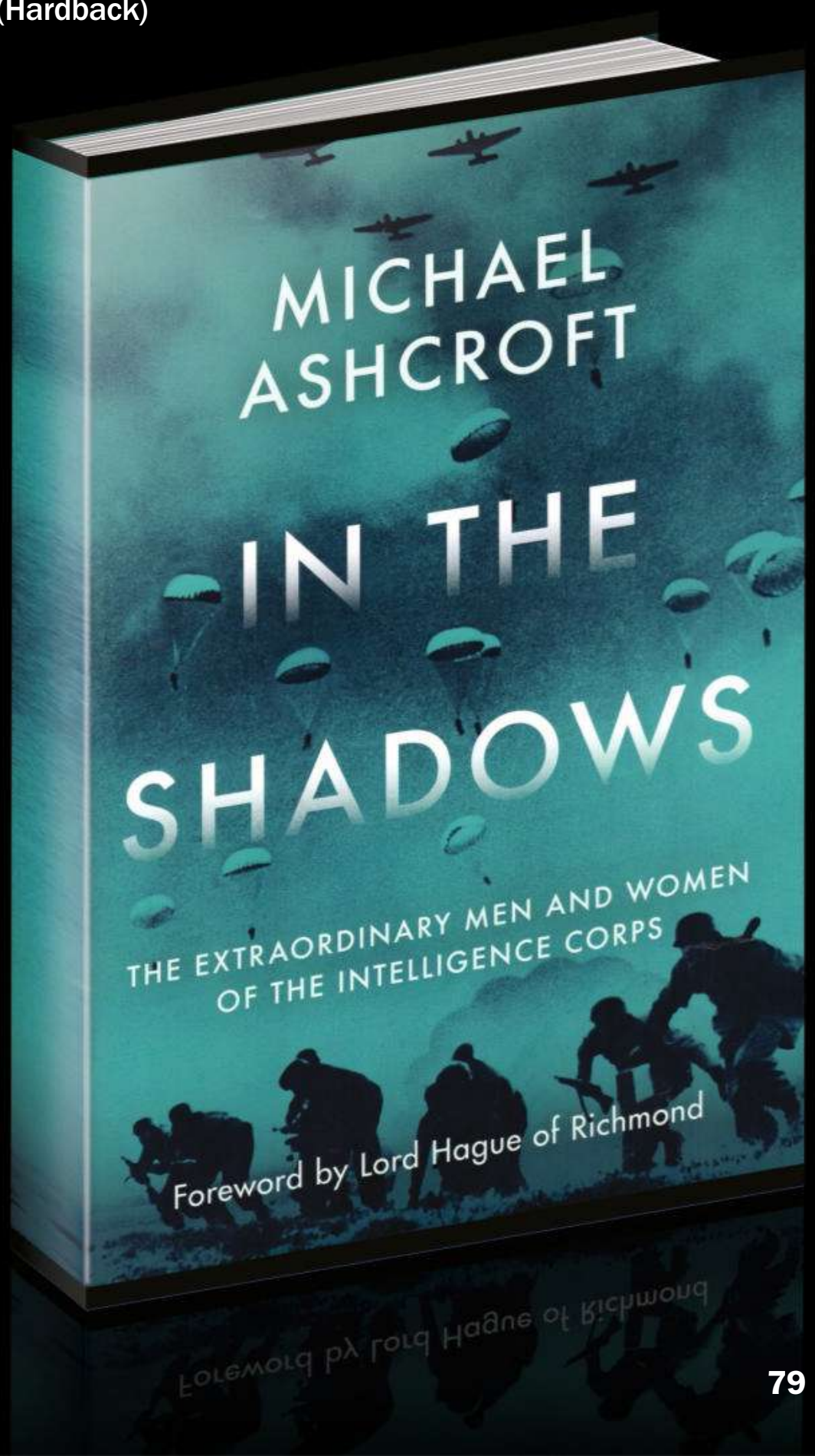
For the most part, those 'glimpses into shadows' must be ones that only lift the veil from historic operations undertaken by the Intelligence Corps rather than much specific detail on its current work – something which of course could easily compromise security. Nevertheless, Ashcroft has had input from the very highest echelons within the military – in essence, those associated with Britain's security and intelligence apparatus.

Drawing on that input, it is fascinating to learn it was specifically operations by the Intelligence Corps that first alerted the world to Russia's impending invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, a warning that allowed nations and organisations to prepare. That this should be so makes publication of *In the Shadows* more than timely, and pointedly reminds us of this secretive organisation's immense value and international standing.

In telling its wider story, the author examines the emergence of the corps, its formation in 1941, and then charts its crucial work throughout World War II by drawing on official sources and accounts from those who were there. Intriguing and yet unsettling are accounts of post-WWII war crimes investigations in which the corps played such an important role.

From World War II, the author takes us through fast-paced accounts from Korea, Palestine, Suez, Cyprus, Aden, Northern Ireland, The Falklands, Gulf Wars and myriad other wars and conflicts in which Britain has been involved.

In each, the role of the Intelligence Corps has been crucial and often pivotal. And across those operations, during and since World War II, no less than 282 corps members have given their lives – three of them women. It is thus appropriate that Lord Ashcroft is donating all author's royalties for this highly recommended title to military charities. **AS**



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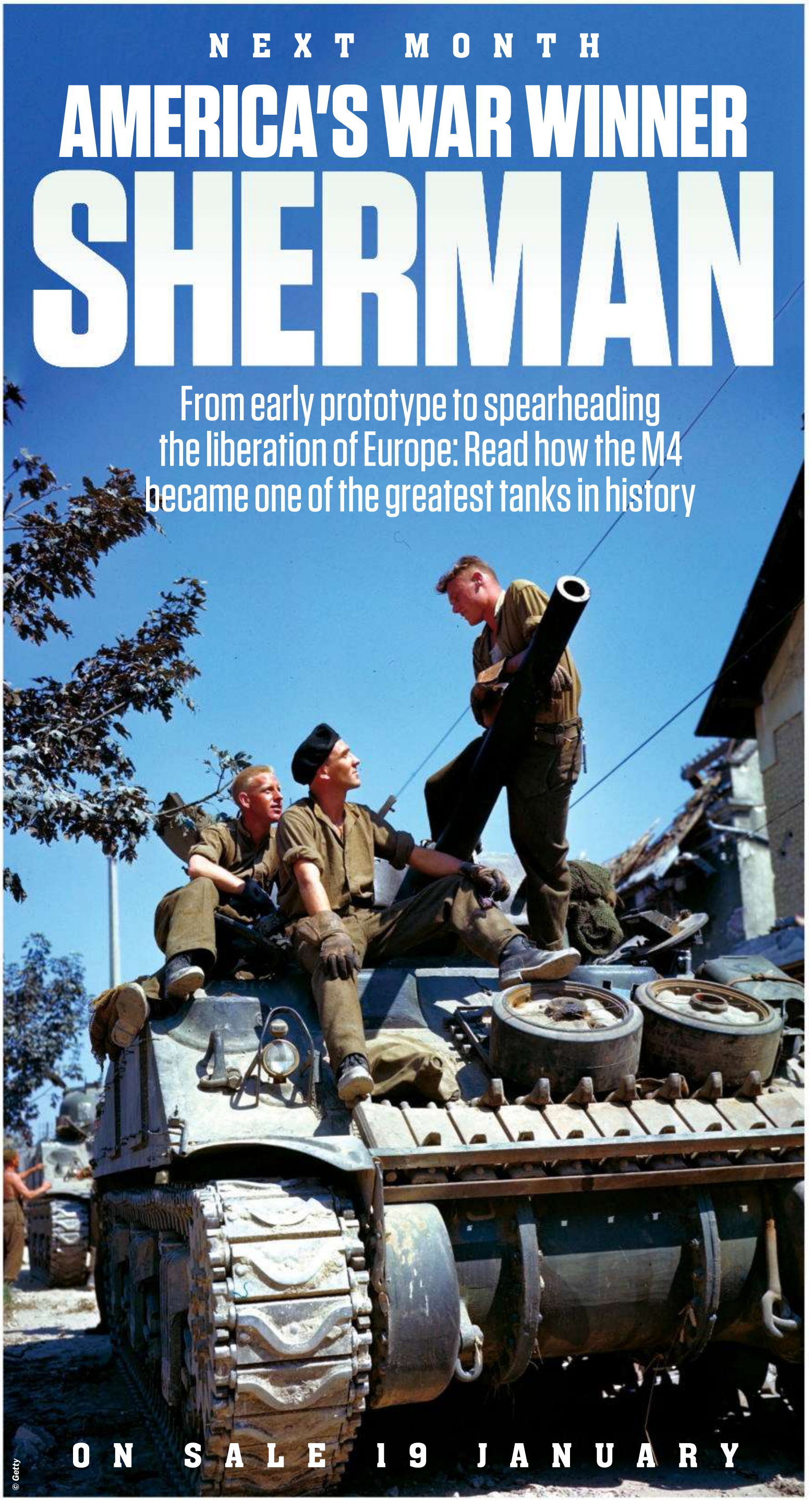

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ADRIAN HELMET

This mass-produced and remarkably strong steel helmet was worn by soldiers serving in the French Army during WWI

In 1914, French soldiers wore soft kepi caps, which provided no protection from head injuries. Trench warfare soon required headgear that could lower mortality rates for front line soldiers, and the French Army ordered the development of a metal helmet that could protect against artillery shrapnel.

Designed by Intendant-General August-Louis Adrian, the M15 Adrian helmet became a mainstay among French soldiers from July 1915. Made of mild steel, it was slightly lighter than the British Brodie helmet and the German Stahlhelm. It had a small visor with the front featuring branded insignias for different units. This pictured helmet's insignia is a flaming grenade, which was the symbol for infantry and cavalry. Other insignias included a bugle for chasseurs, a crossed cannon for artillery, an anchor for colonial soldiers and a crescent for North African units.

Cheap to manufacture and relatively effective against shrapnel, over 20 million Adrian helmets were produced. They were not just worn by the French but also attached units such as the Polish volunteer Blue Army and the African-American 369th Infantry Regiment. It was even adopted by Winston Churchill while he served as a major in the Grenadier Guards during WWI. He had been presented with it by French General Émile Fayolle and wore it with pride.

Although the Adrian helmet was not effective against bullets, it was still remarkably strong. In 2020, a study discovered that it outperformed the 2003 American Advanced Combat Helmet against overhead blasts. Researchers believe that the Adrian's distinctive deflector crest gave it an edge over the much more modern helmet.

The Adrian helmet had a complex manufacturing process with 70 stages involved in its production

NATIONAL MUSEUM of AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY & CULTURE
Smithsonian

The Adrian helmet is on display at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture.

www.nmaahc.si.edu

Images © Smithsonian Institution, Getty

French Army soldiers wearing Adrian helmets pictured on the front line at Douaumont during the Battle of Verdun, 25 February 1916

IF I HAD SOMEWHERE TO LIVE...

I COULD GO ANYWHERE IN LIFE

When Abi's mum died, life got tough. She didn't get on with her dad and the arguments became violent. Abi felt her only choice was to leave home. With just the clothes on her back, and no idea where to go, she ended up sleeping on the streets in the freezing cold.

Right now, you could give a homeless young person like Abi somewhere to start their future

Abi's life changed when she was given a room at Centrepoint. A safe place to sleep and recover. A place to develop the skills and confidence she needed to rebuild her life – and leave homelessness behind for good. Now, Abi believes she can go anywhere.

Thousands of homeless young people like Abi are desperately trying to find their place in the world – but first they need a place to start again. **You could help right now by sponsoring a room at Centrepoint for just 40p a day.**

We know this support changes lives. 88% of the young people we help move on positively in life. So please, help someone like Abi today. Thank you.

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centre point

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Your donation will go towards funding Centrepoint's vital work with young people all year round providing accommodation and support. We sometimes use models and change the names of the young people we work with to protect their identity; however all stories are true and as told by the young person.

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Last year our supporters helped us change the lives of over 15,000 homeless young people. By letting us know we can count on you, we can continue helping young people with a home and a future.

Your privacy is key.

We promise never to sell or swap your details, and will always keep them secure. You can view our Privacy Notice in full at www.centrepoint.org.uk/privacy. You can opt out of post and change how we communicate with you at any time. Please call 0800 232320 and speak to one of our friendly team or email supportercare@centrepoint.org to do this and ask us any questions.

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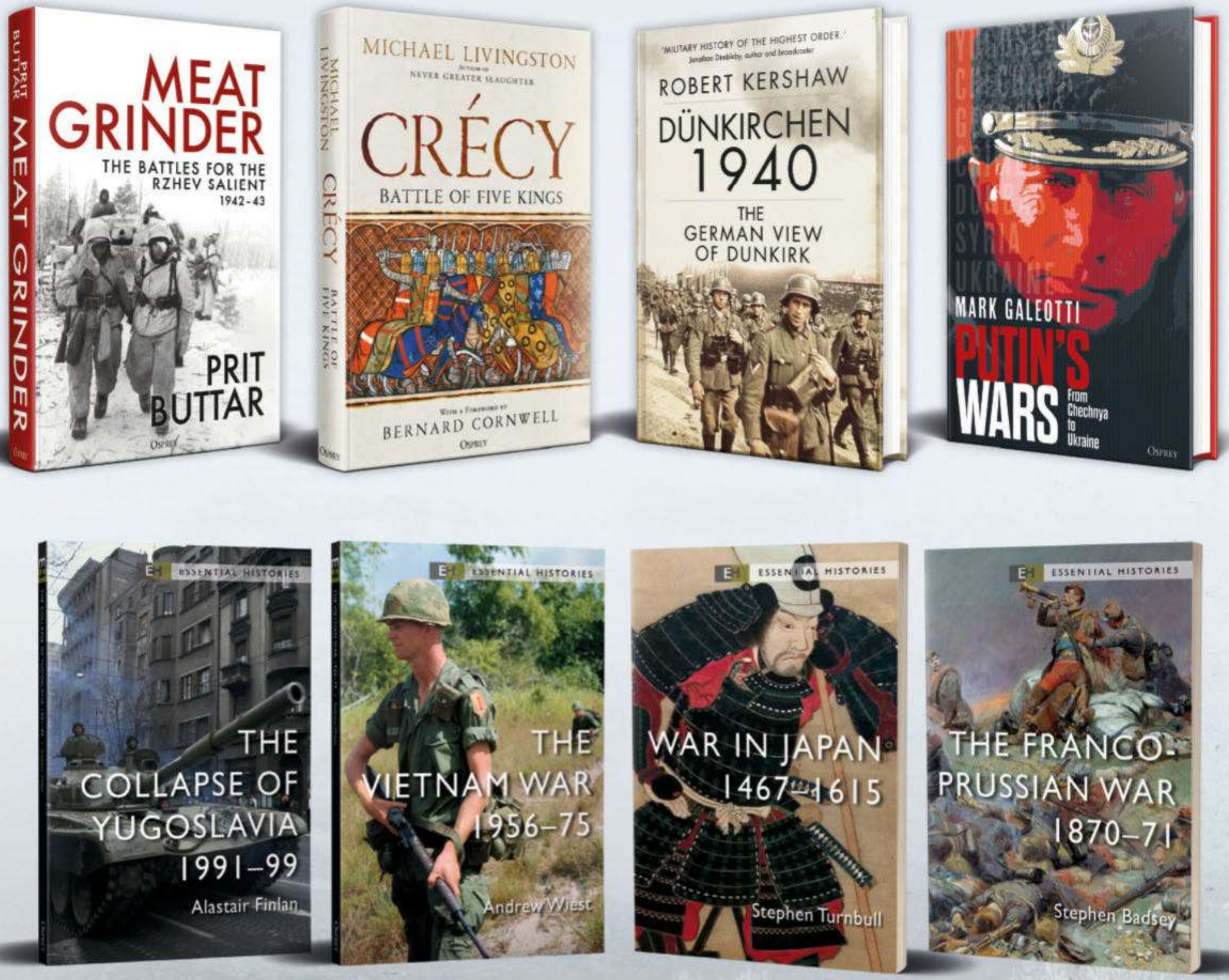

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